

Blessed Gemma Galgani



by Father Amedeo, CP

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PREFACE

In obedience to the decrees of Urban VIII, and to the Apostolic Constitution 'Officiorum' of Leo XIII, we declare that we claim no authority for what is written in this book other than that which is purely human and historical.

This work is published for the greater Glory of Jesus Christ through His most Holy Mother Mary and for the sanctification of the militant Church and her members.

BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS

A day of rejoicing occurred on 12 March 1878, in the home of the chemist of Camigliano, a smiling village at the foot of the blue Pizzorne near Lucca in Italy. Another child had come to gladden the hearts of Enrico Galgani and Aurelia Landi, who already had three children. Three more children were yet to bless their marriage, and therefore the child born in 1878 was to hold the middle place and to be as it were the heart of the family.

Because they considered their children to be the gifts of God, these virtuous parents rejoiced at every new birth. They had indeed every claim to be considered virtuous. Enrico on his mother's side was descended from the family of Blessed John Leonardi, and his character harmonized with the sanctity of the stock from which he sprang. Aurelia, according to the witnesses whose evidence was taken during the processes for the Beatification of her daughter, was a model mother and a



saintly woman. From among many depositions made concerning them, that of a priest, Francis Ghilardi, is very short and to the point: 'The Galgani family occupied a good position in society, bore an exemplary character, and was most exact in the fulfillment of its religious duties.'

The child was baptized the day after her birth by Don Peter Quilici, parish priest of Camigliano. There had been a disagreement in the family about the name she should be given. A paternal uncle, a captain of the army medical staff, wished her to be called Gemma. Her mother objected. The parish priest of Gragano, Don Olivo Dinelli, was asked to settle the question. Aurelia explained to him why she was reluctant to agree to her brother-in-law's suggestion. 'How can the child get to heaven,' she asked, 'if there is no saint of the name of Gemma?' 'But,' replied the priest, 'there are gems in heaven, and let us hope that she may become a gem of Paradise.' So it was agreed to give the child the auspicious name of Gemma, to which were added Maria Umberta Pia.

EARLY EDUCATION

A month after Gemma's birth the family moved to Lucca with a view to living there permanently. Guido, the eldest child, explained that his father made this change of residence in order that he might the better attend to the education and training of his children. The story of Gemma's first years is best told by her aunt, Elisa Galgani, who figured prominently in her life, and who became a most important witness during the processes for her Beatification:

'Gemma passed her childhood and youth in her own home under the watchful eye of her parents. At three years of age Gemma, together with her sisters and her very young brothers, was sent to a private school conducted by some

sisters named Vallini. No complaints were ever made regarding Gemma, and her parents were assured that she was good and obedient. There she learned to say her prayers and to do very simple knitting. She was removed from this school after her mother's death when she was seven. At this time she was always obedient and respectful to everyone and was never wayward. She was plump and good-natured, so much so that she used to amuse my brother.

'When she was about four she came to our home at Porcari for a few days to enjoy the country air. My mother, in whose room Gemma slept in a little bed by herself, found her there one day on her knees, with hands joined, before a picture of the Heart of Mary. She called my brother, the army doctor, saying: "Come and see how Gemma prays," and together they watched her. "What are you doing, Gemma?" asked my brother. Gemma answered: "Go away, please; I am saying the Hail Mary." As they retired my brother said: "If I had a camera I would have taken her photograph!"'

Gemma's mother said morning and evening prayers daily with her children, and also taught the older ones to make little meditations. On Sundays she took them to Mass and to the evening devotions in the parish church. The children also went with her to the catechetical instructions for adults but she did not allow them to attend the catechetical instruction for children, preferring to instruct them herself or to bring a teacher into the house for that purpose. One of these teachers, Isabella Bastiani, made the following deposition in the processes:

'The Galgani's wanted someone to look after the sick and take charge of the children. My stepmother, Maddalena, was chosen. In this way I came to know the family and Gemma. My stepmother asked me if I would undertake to teach the children their prayers and catechism. I then began to teach

Gemma and her brother Tonino the catechism, after which I used to bring Gemma to the Church to visit the Blessed Sacrament and say the Rosary and the other prayers I knew. Nothing seemed as pleasing to Gemma as to go to the Church to say her prayers. She never grew tired. When she had said an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be to the Father in honour of her Angel Guardian, she used to turn to me and say, "To whom should I pray now?" If I told her a pious story she always wanted another one and said repeatedly, "Tell me more, tell me more." Although so very young, when she was in the Church she always remained kneeling with her hands joined, and she was quite recollected.'

The evidence of the Vallini sisters completes the picture of Gemma and her family, given by Elisa Galgani and Isabella Bastiani.

'Our family had a villa and some property in the neighborhood of Porcari about six miles from Lucca, and in consequence we formed a close friendship with Carlo Galgani, the district doctor. On the Feast of Saint Michael to whom our Church was dedicated, he and his wife and children used to dine with us, and we returned the visits. In the course of time Carlo Galgani's son, Enrico, came to live at Lucca, and knowing that we kept a school there, with his wife's consent willingly entrusted to us his five little children, the second of whom was Gemma, then not more than two years of age.' [Elisa Galgani said that Gemma was three years of age when she first went to school, and since she was usually most exact in her statement she is not likely to be wrong on this occasion.]

Even at this tender age Gemma had reached the use of reason and her intellect was prematurely developed. We could teach her prayers that lasted twenty-five minutes without her ever growing tired. At five she could read the

Breviary like an experienced person. She was assiduous at her work and learned all that was taught to her. She was loved by all her companions for these good qualities. All the time she was with us, we had no occasion to punish her; a word of reproof was enough for the defects inseparable from her age. Her two brothers and two sisters were with her at school, but never once was she known to be angry with them. She allowed them to select the best fruit, and at dinner she was always contented, whatever she had, the smile that played on her lips being the only sign that she was pleased or displeased.'

EARLY GROWTH IN HOLINESS

If Gemma's good qualities were pleasing to all who knew her, they were certainly a source of great consolation to her parents. To her father she was 'the light of his eyes.' He seemed unable to do without her, his first question on returning home always being: 'Where's Gemma?' He used to say that he had only two children, Gemma and Gino. Gino was two years older than Gemma and was her rival in virtue. Of him Gemma wrote in her Autobiography: 'I really loved him more than all the others, and we were always together. During the holidays we used to amuse ourselves by making little altars.'

Enrico Galgani's preference for his eldest daughter reminds one of the particular affection between Saint Therese of Lisieux and her father. Her clothes had to come from the best shops. She very frequently accompanied him and whenever they were in the city at the dinner hour, it was made evident that in his opinion the best hotel was her due.

This favoritism did not altogether please her: she seems to have recognized the friction and jealousy it might cause. 'Am I your only child?' she asked her father one day. 'I love

all the children,' he answered, 'but remember, you are my eldest daughter.' When he took her on his knees to caress her, she used to break away from him crying: 'Papa, do not touch me.' 'But I am your father,' he would expostulate. 'Yes, Papa, but I do not want anyone to touch me.' Enrico, puzzled but not displeased, used to say: 'I wonder what will become of my Gemma!'

So great indeed was her objection to being touched in any way by anyone that she even preferred to wash herself rather than permit her Aunt Elisa to do so. Once, when she was only six or seven, a cousin who came on horseback to deliver a parcel at her home, paid dearly for trying to kiss her, as she ran to take the parcel from him. He held her outstretched hand and bent down to caress her, but she repulsed him so violently that he lost his balance and, falling off the horse, hurt himself. Gemma was punished for this conduct by having her hands tied behind her back for a whole day.

Her mother's love, though not less tender, was certainly more solid. She, too, preferred Gemma. Was she not the child of prayer, the fulfillment of a long desire to have a daughter? The knowledge that her health was being undermined by tuberculosis, and that her days were numbered, made Aurelia even more affectionate towards Gemma, who years later wrote in her Autobiography: 'I remember that when I was very small my mother often took me in her arms, and many times in doing so, she wept. "I prayed so long that Jesus might send me a daughter," she said to me. "He has consoled me, it is true, but too late. I am sick and I must die and leave you."'

In the face of death Aurelia sought comfort in prayer and until the end did her utmost to fulfill her duties towards her children. When oppressed with fever, even when wearing

plasters to relieve her cough, she rose very early to go to Holy Communion. Every Saturday she brought her children to the Church and prepared them there herself for the Sacrament of Penance. Their frequent presence in the Church was noticed by the Parish Priest, Don Raphael Cianetti, who afterwards described Gemma as 'a silent child whose demeanor edified all who saw her.'

Sometimes this holy woman, emulating the mother of Saint Paul of the Cross, the Founder of the Passionists, would take her daughter on to her lap and pointing to the Crucifix would speak to her of the sufferings of Jesus. 'Look, Gemma, this good Jesus has died on the Cross for us!' It was a scene that must have filled the Angels with admiration. Gemma drank in eagerly the story of the Passion. Looking now at the Crucifix, now at her mother, she used to say: 'Tell me more, Mom, tell me more.' Often when Aurelia was busy in the house she felt her dress plucked and heard Gemma's pleading voice: 'Mom, speak to me for a little while about Jesus.'

But the disease that was consuming Aurelia was making implacable progress. The coming separation from her seven children who needed her so much, added to her sufferings. The thought of leaving Gemma pained her most of all. 'Gemma,' she said to her one day, 'if you were able, would you come with me to the place to which Jesus is calling me? 'Where?' asked Gemma. 'To Paradise with Jesus and the Angels.' This invitation filled Gemma with joy and an indefinable yearning. With an ingenuousness that was her constant characteristic she wrote sixteen years later: 'It was Mom who made me as a child long to go to Heaven. And now,' she added, alluding to a prohibition that she must not ask God to let her die, 'if I still desire Heaven and want to go there, there is almost an outcry.' So anxious indeed was the

child Gemma to go to Heaven that she was loath to leave her mother's side lest she might flyaway without her.

THE FIRST SACRIFICE

But Aurelia could not take Gemma with her to Heaven, so she directed all her thoughts towards the child's spiritual future. To whom was she to entrust her soul? To the Holy Ghost, concluded Aurelia. At once she began to complete her religious instruction in preparation for the Sacrament of Confirmation, which Gemma received from Archbishop Nicholas Ghilardi, on 26 May 1885, in the Basilica of Saint Michael in Foro.

At the end of the ceremony Gemma assisted at a Mass of Thanksgiving. The Holy Ghost Who had found her soul so well disposed for His gifts, willed to ask of this child of scarcely seven years the greatest sacrifice she could make. 'I was assisting as best I could,' wrote Gemma in her Autobiography, 'and praying for Mom, when on a sudden a voice in my heart said to me: "Are you willing to give me your mother?" "Yes," I replied, "if you take me also!" "No," said the voice, "give me your mother of your own will. For the present you must remain with your father. I will take you to her in Heaven later." I had to say yes, and when the Mass was finished I ran home.'

This constitutes the first celestial conversation to occur in the life of Blessed Gemma Galgani. It is also the first in a long chain of sacrifices which God was to demand of this generous soul. Her life was to be a succession of pains and sufferings, which were to be for her the key that opened the treasures of God's grace.

Gemma arrived home to find her mother almost at the point of death, and on seeing her she burst into tears and wept

unrestrainedly. She could not tear herself away from the bed. She had indeed made the sacrifice, but she could not help wishing to go to heaven with her.

The imminent danger of death passed, but only for a short time, and within four months Aurelia was dead. Gemma was not present at the end. The story of the last days is told in the processes by Elisa Galgani: 'Gemma had the misfortune to lose her mother when she was seven years of age. Although only a child she tried to assist her sick mother as best she could and did not want to be separated from her. Sometimes she would climb on to the bed and put her arms around her mother's neck and kiss her. The doctors often suggested that the children, especially Gemma, who was the eldest daughter and the most thoughtful and affectionate, should be kept away from the sick-room because the patient had tuberculosis. Gemma was, therefore, sent to Saint Gennaro to stay with an uncle, Anthony Landi, who owned much property in that district. The place was not new to Gemma, for her mother used to spend a month there every year with her children.'

Gemma was at Saint Gennaro for three months, according to her aunt Elena Landi, when her mother died on 17 September 1886, aged thirty-nine. Her five years of slow martyrdom had purified her soul and made it more worthy of Heaven.

Shortly before her death she said: 'I offer my life willingly to God that I may obtain the grace of having my eight children with me in Paradise.'

'Gemma received the news of the death from her aunt at Saint Gennaro with whom she was staying,' continues Elisa Galgani. 'Her only words then were: "Mom is in Heaven." Although she loved her mother deeply she did not cry, but

remained serene and calm, and submissive to God's will. Her first words to me on returning home from Saint Gennaro were: "Why are you weeping? Mom is in Heaven and suffers no longer; oh, how much she suffered! You must now try to regain your own health so that you can help us."

THE LOSS OF HER MOTHER

The loss of a mother is always a great calamity in a family, especially when all the children are still young. At Aurelia's death, the youngest child, Julia, was not yet three. What was Enrico Galgani to do? Already his sister Elisa was living with him while she recovered from the effects of an accident sustained at Lucca. So he decided to invite another sister, Elena, to look after his home and the children. As for Gemma, she had already chosen in place of her earthly mother, a heavenly one, Mary, the Mother of God.

In addition to the void left in the family by his wife's death, there was the void made in Enrico's heart by Gemma's absence. About Christmas time, therefore, he arranged for the homecoming of his children who for some months had been staying with various relatives. Gemma was to leave Saint Gennaro. There were difficulties, however. She had grown into the hearts of her uncle and aunt, and they were reluctant to part with her. 'Gemma was always good and obedient to all,' said Elena Landi.

'When her mother sickened, she asked me to take charge of this child, saying: "If there is no objection at your home, I should be very pleased if you would keep Gemma with you." One day the aunts and nephews came to say that since Gemma was the eldest daughter she should return home to her brothers and sisters, and that if I wanted one of the children I could have one of the younger girls. I loved Gemma so much that I did not wish to have anyone else in

her place, and I became indignant. The poor child seeing me cry became upset, and said to me resignedly: "Oh Aunt, let me go to please them; I will come again soon." Hearing these words from a child of seven only made me more indignant. I cannot describe how displeased I was.'

But even before Elena and Elisa had set out to bring back Gemma from Saint Gennaro, there was one who had been praying fervently for her return home. This was Gino. To Enrico, Gino and Gemma were one, and this was an added reason that made him determined that there should be no delay about Gemma's return. So at Christmas the members of the scattered family were once more reunited. But it was a sad Christmas. No one could fill their mother's place and she was missed at every turn. Everyone was sad except Gemma, who with a strength above her years encouraged them all. 'Why should we weep?' she said, 'Mom is in Heaven.'

CHILDHOOD - ENTRUSTED TO THE CARE OF THE SISTERS OF SAINT ZITA

After probably the saddest Christmas in his life, Enrico came to an important decision regarding Gemma, who since his wife's death had become doubly dear to him. Gemma had already left the infants' school kept by the sisters Vallini, and it was therefore necessary to send her to a more advanced school where her rare gifts of mind and heart might be cultivated to the best advantage. Like a good Catholic, Enrico could think of nothing better than to place her under the care of a very holy nun, Sister Elena Guerra, who had founded in Lucca a religious institute, the Oblates of the Holy Ghost, commonly called Zistine Sisters.

What, one conjectures, were the feelings of the holy foundress when she first came face to face with Gemma Galgani? Sometimes it happens that saintly souls when

meeting on the pathway of life experience an unusual spiritual attraction for one another. When in 1907 Sister Elena Guerra heard that steps were being taken to have Gemma raised to the altars of the Church, she wrote: 'My poor heart rejoices in the knowledge that they are working for the glorification of my holy pupil, Gemma Galgani.' On her side Gemma, as it were in gratitude for the care bestowed upon her, seems to have obtained for this noble woman the grace of dying on Holy Saturday as the Easter bells were ringing out, on 11 April 1914, the anniversary of her own death. Sister Elena is said to have influenced Leo XIII to issue his Encyclical on devotion to the Holy Ghost.

Gemma was delighted with her new school. 'I began to go to the Nuns' school' she wrote in her Autobiography, 'and I was in Heaven.' It could not have seemed otherwise to such a child. She lived in an atmosphere of piety, under the guidance of religious who were still filled with that fervour which characterizes, more particularly, the first members of a new religious Institute.

'I WILL STRIVE TO BE A SAINT'

Gemma's longing for divine knowledge, already seen in her conversations with her mother, began to be manifested more clearly now. She asked Sister Catherine Vagliensi to tell her something about the sufferings of Christ in His Passion, and drank in every word so eagerly, and allowed herself to be so penetrated by the recital, that she became ill. 'I told my mistress of my desire (of knowing Jesus Crucified),' wrote Gemma, 'and she began to tell me something every day, choosing an hour for the recital when the other children were in bed.'

One evening she described the Crucifixion, the crowning with thorns, and all the other sufferings of Jesus so vividly,

that the sorrow and compassion I felt brought on a high fever and I had to remain in bed the whole day after.'

Fortunately, when the processes for the Beatification were set on foot, Sister Julia Sestini, who on the death in 1888 of Sister Catherine Vagliensi, became Gemma's mistress and confidante, was still living, and able to make important depositions concerning her pupil. One incident she mentioned recalls something similar in the life of Blessed Bartolomea Capitanio, Foundress of the Sisters of Charity of Milan. One day a teacher in school asked Bartolomea and her companions which of them desired to be a saint. They answered with one voice: all wanted to be saints. Who would be a saint first? The teacher decided to solve the question by casting lots. She procured as many straws of unequal length as there were pupils, and holding them in her hand declared that whoever drew the longest straw should be a saint first. Bartolomea drew the longest straw. She was so surprised that she at once ran to the Chapel to pray.' Gemma did not run to the Chapel when in a similar way she drew the longest straw. According to Sister Julia Sestini, she danced with joy and cried out: 'Yes! I will strive to be a saint.'

Another incident, related by Elisa Galgani, again reveals the innocence and artlessness of this singular child. One day when she came home from school she said to her aunt: 'The Superior, Sister Elena Guerra, said to me: "Gemma, Gemma, you have committed an act of pride today." Aunt, what are acts of pride? Explain to me what an act of pride means; I do not know this sin.' Her aunt suggested that she should ask the Mother Superior herself for a definition of an act of pride. She did so, and was greatly relieved to find that she had not committed it. She returned home. on the evening of that day very pleased and said: 'No, I have done nothing wrong, but I am glad also to know what this sin is.' Years later she wrote

in her Autobiography: 'Yes, I did indeed commit this sin, but Jesus knows whether I recognized it or not. I often went to all the teachers, to all the pupils, to the Mother Superior, to ask pardon for this sin. In the evening and very often at night, I wept over it alone. Without being aware of it I fell into this sin many times a day.'

STRUGGLING TO FORM CHARACTER

It will be interesting to know why this holy child was accused of pride. From what has been said, it is clear that she herself was often responsible and she knew it for these accusations. She even admitted in her Autobiography that pride was the only defect of which she was accused and for which she was punished. 'The teacher,' she wrote, 'often called me a proud girl.'

According to Father Germanus, her first biographer, and everyone who knew her at this time agrees with him, Gemma was by nature vivacious. 'Whoever watched her closely,' he says, 'could not but observe that she had a sanguine temperament and that her blood was easily fired. Only the violence she did to her natural bent prevented her from becoming what indeed some said she was, a little imp. Alert and perspicacious as she was, this inclination might easily have dominated her whole character.' This may explain the almost contradictory depositions made concerning her at this period of her life. Sister Julia Sestini declared she had a lively disposition. Another witness said that she was accustomed to hold in check a rather spirited temperament. On the other hand, according to Don Andrew Bartoloni, she was of a quiet and calm disposition, and Sister Julia Sestini in another deposition says: 'She was so obedient that only a sign was necessary to recall her to her duty. She was noted for her application to study and her assiduity at her work, and she obtained several prizes. She

was generally well liked by the children, and she knew how to keep silent.'

The truth is that Gemma was even now seriously endeavoring to correct her faults of character, and for this purpose was opposing her own will and nature. What was pleasing to her she refused, what she disliked she welcomed. Nevertheless, her first steps in the way of perfection were not accomplished with ease. Her demeanor suggested that she was watching over her conduct with effort and excessive attention, and this made her appear serious-minded, unsociable and too silent for her age. Her motives could not be known to all nor could they be always understood. That is why she was said to be unintelligent, blunt in speech, off-hand and even rude in manner. Some said she was proud and disdainful, others, more kind-hearted, that she was shy; a few declared that she was stupid. Compliments never came Gemma's way, at any time. She certainly never sought them. 'Oh!' she used to say, 'How can I please people? I am indeed stupid, and what does it matter if I am taken for what I am?' When charged with being proud she answered: 'What is the meaning of pride? I never even think of it. I do not reply to questions because I do not know what to say. If I do answer, I am at a loss afterwards to know whether I answered right or wrong, and so I remain silent.'

As the years rolled by, however, Gemma made such progress in virtue that even before she left school she had acquired almost complete self-mastery. Whatever was artificial or forced in her manners or conduct disappeared, and virtue seemed to become a second nature.

YOU BELONG TO JESUS

Whatever the attitude of others, Sister Julia Sestini was Gemma's friend. But even Sister Julia often said: 'Gemma, Gemma, if I did not read you in your eyes, I would judge you as the others do.' She understood the soul-struggles of this holy girl and did her best to keep her on the right path. Her predecessor,. Sister Catherine Vagliensi, had often said to Gemma: 'Gemma, you belong to Jesus and you must give yourself entirely to Him. He is pleased with you, but you are in need of great assistance from Him. Your greatest pleasure ought to be to meditate on His Sacred Passion and death.' So well did she know her pupil that Gemma wrote in her Autobiography: 'This good teacher had guessed what was in my mind.' Sister Julia Sestini's influence was not less efficacious. 'Under her direction,' wrote Gemma, 'I began to have a greater desire for prayer. Every evening after school, I went home and shut myself in a room where I recited the whole Rosary on my knees. Often at night, I got up for a quarter of an hour to recommend my poor soul to Jesus.'

It was also at this time that she began to long to practice penance, and this desire burst into flame whenever she meditated upon the Sacred Passion.

'Every day,' she wrote, 'I had a part of the Passion explained to me. Often when reflecting on my sins and on my ingratitude towards Jesus we began to weep together. During these four years this good teacher also taught me to practice some little penance for love of Jesus. The first was to wear a cord around my waist, but so far as I was able I obtained permission from my confessor. Then she taught me to mortify my eyes and my tongue, and I succeeded in becoming better, but it was hard work.'

Her spirit of piety in these years was well remembered by Sister Julia Sestini:

'We were accustomed, especially during Lent, to explain the Passion of our Divine Lord. Gemma listened most attentively, and never grew tired of it. I have seen her weep sometimes. One day she and another child stood up, and Gemma asked: "What is the book out of which you read these things, because we should like to get one in order to study and meditate upon them better?" I advised the children to make five minutes' meditation in the morning, and to devote a few minutes every evening to an examination of conscience. I saw Gemma smile. When I questioned her I found that she had already the habit of making meditation and that she spent much more than five minutes at it.'

With a heart already so united to God, it is not surprising that Gemma was remarkable for the way in which she attended to the altars in the Chapel and classrooms, devoting her time to keeping them clean and becomingly decorated, nor is it surprising to know that she had no interest in the amusements which delight other children. 'She had no inclination or desire for games,' said Sister Julia Sestini, 'and when obedience compelled her to take part in school plays or concerts her demeanor was always edifying and serious. In the daily recreations she preferred to be alone or with the teacher. When her companions invited her to accompany them I used to advise her to do so, saying: "Go along, Gemma, and don't be singular." Then she went gladly and quite willingly.'

Elisa Galgani's recollections of Gemma's piety at this time are more detailed:

'She had a deep love for the Blessed Virgin and prayed to Her with great fervor and devotion, often repeating: "Holy Mary, make me a saint." She had also a very special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Whom she ardently loved and to Whom she prayed with extraordinary fervor. I

remember that when she was a child at school, she used to pray for success in her examinations so that her father especially might be pleased. She not only prayed, but carried on her person little pictures of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Once I saw her dip her finger in the oil of the lamp that was burning before the Blessed Sacrament, then touch her tongue with it in order that she might be able to answer the examiners well. She often read books about the Blessed Virgin, which were given to her by Monsignor Volpi or by the parish priest of Saint Leonard's. Sometimes she read them aloud to her brothers and sisters and even to her aunts. Every day she said the Rosary with the family. She made triduums or novenas for every feast of the Blessed Virgin and not only attended the special devotions held in Our Lady's honor during the months of May and October in the Church, but also repeated them at home with her brothers and sisters.'

THE QUEEN OF VIRTUES

Among the virtues that adorned Gemma's soul, the queen virtue shone conspicuously. And indeed charity or love for her neighbor for God's sake was one of her most outstanding characteristics even as a girl. Her brother Guido speaks of her 'special charity towards the poor.' If she met a beggar on her way to or from school she would be sure to part with whatever money she had, and found more pleasure in its loss than she would have found in anything it could have purchased. It was this charity united to a profound humility which made Gemma keep silent under unmerited reproof, thus screening the actual offenders. 'Why don't you tell your teacher and let her know that you are not guilty?' said Sister Julia Sestini, who did not like to see her unjustly accused. 'Oh let the matter rest,' Gemma answered, 'it is better so.'

But already in these early years Gemma's zeal for the spiritual welfare of her neighbor was noticeable. She listened with particular interest when the Sister read to the pupils in school the Annals of the Foreign Missions.

'Gemma was filled with a great desire for the universal reign of Christ,' deposed Sister Julia Sestini, 'and worked for the conversion of infidels not only by prayer, but also by contributing whatever money she had.' The pupils of the Sisters of Saint Zita were all enrolled in the Associations called Propagation of the Faith and Holy Childhood, and Gemma paid her subscription regularly.

God was pleased with her zeal for the salvation of souls, and seems to have given proof of His pleasure on an occasion which was recalled by Sister Julia Sestini: 'It was during the Carnival,' she said, 'and we were rehearsing for our Concert when the Mother Superior entered the Hall and asked for prayers for a dying man who had refused to receive the last Sacraments. We stopped the rehearsal and said some prayers. When they were over Gemma came up to me and whispered: "Our prayers are answered." That same evening I heard of the man's sincere conversion and that he had died with all the comforts of religion.'

A MODEL PUPIL

Gemma was, as we have seen, her father's joy, and her return every evening from school with a smile on her lips helped not a little to assuage the troubles of the day. He anticipated great things for her and watched with pleasure her progress not only in virtue, but also in her studies. Elisa Galgani had distinct recollections of Gemma at this time:

'Once she had to confess to me that she had passed very well in all subjects in her class, and in French had secured

very high marks. Some of her companions having failed were sad and sore about it. She said to me: "I am sorry that some of my companions did not pass. I should have liked all to pass, for then I should have been happier myself." She did not like amusements or games, not even those suited to her age, and did not play with dolls. I remember that on one occasion her father wanted her to go to hear the city band which was to play in the Piazza. "Gemma," he said, "take your sister this evening to hear the band." But she answered: "No, Daddy, let us go to the Walls; there we shall enjoy ourselves better." The people of Lucca being gathered round the band the path on top of the walls was deserted. They would also be able to go along in good time to the evening devotions in the parish church. Unlike other children Gemma never went alone into the City.'

Although Gemma did not enter for the public examinations, because it was not customary at the College, she did well at the examinations which were held by a visiting professor. According to her teacher, she attained a high degree of proficiency in literature, science and mathematics. But it was in the knowledge of her religion, the catechism, the Bible and ecclesiastical history, that she shone conspicuously. In a competition amongst the children of the city she won the gold medal for Christian Doctrine. This success elated her father, who thought of sending her later on to the University. But Gemma's answer to the suggestion was uncompromising: 'No, the University is not for me.'

Man proposes, but God disposes. God was preparing Gemma for another mission in life, and her thoughts were already turned away from this world. Sister Julia Sestini gives us a glimpse of Gemma's soul:

'She used always to say that her hopes were in Jesus, and often repeated: "How dreary it is upon earth!" and raising

her eyes to Heaven, "How pleasant to be up there!" She used to turn towards the Chapel where Jesus dwelt behind closed doors and say: "Faith breaks down all barriers and love stands chained to Jesus." When we suggested to the children on one occasion some act of mortification, advising them to practise these acts frequently, Gemma said: "What wealth! We can go to Heaven with overflowing riches!" She often said: "Gemma is good for nothing, but Gemma and Jesus can do all things!" It was thus she encouraged herself to overcome obstacles.'

HER FIRST HOLY COMMUNION - 'GIVE ME JESUS!'

The most important event which occurred while Gemma was at the College of the Zitine Sisters was her first Holy Communion, an event which had a profound influence upon her subsequent life. The desire to draw near to Jesus and receive Him in Holy Communion had very early inflamed her heart. The example of her mother, for whom the Eucharist was daily bread during her long sickness, certainly helped to intensify this desire, and we may be sure that in answer to the oft-repeated request: 'Talk to me about Jesus,' Aurelia poured into the heart and mind of her child her own ardent longings for the Divine Guest of the Altar.

That Gemma yearned to receive the Bread of Angels, we have the testimony of her aunt Elisa, who also deposed in the processes for the Beatification that the curate of Saint Leonard's parish where the Galgani family lived, had said to Gemma: 'You will receive Holy Communion when you are seven; you are too young now.' But her seventh birthday came without the fulfillment of this promise. There was then a universal prejudice against allowing young children to receive Holy Communion. If Gemma had lived a few years longer she would have seen a Pope, the saintly Pius X, open

to innocent hearts the Tabernacles of the world, and would have grieved that she had been born too soon to be able to enjoy this privilege.

When, after her mother's death, Gemma was sent to the College of the Zitine Sisters, the desire of being united to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament grew more ardent. It became her only thought, the one aspiration of her heart. She now said to her teachers at the College what she had already often said at home: 'Give me Jesus, and you will see how good I shall be. I shall be different; I shall not commit any more sins. Give Him to me; I long for Him so much that it is becoming unbearable.' But her age, according to the then prevailing custom, was against her. Besides, because of her delicate appearance she looked like a child, not of nine, but of six years, and all her tearful requests were in vain. In her humility, Gemma seems never to have realized why her repeated requests were refused, for in her Autobiography she attributes it to her sins: 'I early manifested the desire to receive Holy Communion, but I was found so bad and ignorant that they were afraid to allow me to do so. They began to instruct me and to give me good advice, but I always became worse.'

Finally, the spiritual director of the College, Monsignor John Volpi, was conquered by the child's insistence and decided to plead her cause with her father. Monsignor Volpi, who was Gemma's ordinary confessor until her death, and who was in 1897 consecrated Auxiliary Bishop to the Archbishop of Lucca, and later became Bishop of Arezzo, died in Rome, 19 June 1931, as titular Archbishop of Antioch in Pisidia. He was a man of outstanding piety and integrity, a father to the orphans and the poor. Leo XIII used to call him 'the saint of Lucca.' Everywhere he went he left the imprint of his charity and indefatigable zeal. Before his death he gave a considerable sum of money as the first subscription towards

the enlargement and beautifying of the Chapel of the Passionist Nuns, where Gemma's body now lies, and where he himself desired to be one day buried.

The argument used by Mgr. Volpi to overcome Enrico's reluctance was the most likely one to touch a father's heart. He pointed out to Enrico that he was in this dilemma, either he must give his permission or see his child die of sorrow. The permission was immediately granted.

Gemma's joy was unbounded, but in her Autobiography all she says is: 'I had only one desire, to make my first Communion soon, and it was known to be so strong that my request was very soon granted.'

PREPARING FOR HER FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Gemma, however, was not yet fully satisfied and began to think of the best way of preparing herself for this first meeting with Jesus in the sacrament of His love. Nothing seemed more appropriate than to spend the ten days usually devoted to spiritual exercises with the Sisters at the Convent. But how was she to obtain permission from her father, who did not like to be separated from her for even a few days? But there was one sure means of getting her own way with him, and she knew it - tears. So Enrico capitulated and even promised not to visit her or disturb her recollection in any way.

This settled, Gemma turned all her attention to preparing her soul for the coming of Jesus.

'In the evening I received permission to go,' she wrote, 'and in the morning I went to the Convent. During this time I saw none of the family. But how happy I was; it was Heaven!'

Of those days it is better to let her speak for herself:

'I had scarcely reached the Convent and settled down before I ran to the Chapel to thank Jesus and ask Him to prepare me well to receive Him in Holy Communion. But I also had another desire. When I was very small Mom used to show me the Crucifix and tell me that Jesus had died on the Cross for mankind, and afterwards I heard the same from my teachers, but I never understood properly, and I would have liked to know perfectly the Life and Passion of Jesus.'

What a sublime aspiration for a young child, to know Jesus and Him crucified, to know Him in His Passion in order to know Him better in the Eucharist. Jesus in the Eucharist and Jesus on the Cross would be throughout her life the inseparable objects of her love. 'O Jesus,' she was later on heard to say in an ecstasy, 'You hear what the confessor asks me: What do you do when you are before Jesus? If I am with Jesus Crucified, I suffer; if I am with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I love.' For Gemma, to suffer and to love were the same thing. 'Oh, yes, Jesus,' she said in ecstasy, 'whoever loves Thee truly, suffers willingly. O Jesus, to love Thee and to suffer for Thee!' This was her heart's cry and her life's sole objective.

At this point in her Autobiography, Gemma describes the effects which the story of the Passion, as related by Sister Catherine Vagliensi, had upon her and the fever it brought on, and her father's displeasure when he knew she was sick.

Referring to these facts, Sister Gesualda in her Life of Gemma asks whether so deep an impression could be made upon a child by the mere description of the Passion, however vivid, and suggests that it was rather the result of the direct action of Jesus Who desired to prepare her for the gift He was later on to bestow upon her, that of participating in His

Passion. 'Jesus filled her with a love for His Passion,' she says, 'because the lively sorrow she would experience in meditating upon it would awaken in her an ardent desire to be associated with Him in His sufferings and to share in them, to give love for love.'

Gemma listened very attentively to the priest who gave the spiritual exercises to the children. One thing he said struck her particularly. It was a paraphrase of the words of the Gospel: 'Whoever eats the Flesh of Jesus shall live by His life.' 'These words,' she wrote, 'filled me with consolation, and I said to myself that when Jesus is with me I shall live no longer, but Jesus will live in me. I was burning with desire for the moment to arrive when I could say: "Jesus lives in me." Consumed with desire I passed entire nights in meditating upon these words.'

To crown her days of preparation Gemma decided to make a general confession. She was only a child of nine years of age, most innocent, almost angelic, and yet she tells us that with the help of the Sisters she prepared herself for a general confession and completed it at a third visit to her confessor, Mgr. Volpi. One wonders what such an angel had to confess?

RECEIVED HER FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

A truly happy day for Gemma was 17 June 1887, the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

She had jotted down on the previous evening, the resolutions she had made during the retreat: (1)' I will go to confession and Communion each time as if they were to be my last. (2) I will often visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, especially when I am in trouble. (3) I will prepare for every Feast of the Blessed Virgin by some mortification, and every

evening I will ask the blessing of my heavenly Mother. (4) I desire to remain always in the presence of God. (5) Every time the clock strikes I will repeat three times, "My Jesus Mercy." She would have added more had she not been observed by a wise and prudent teacher who told her to be content with what she had already written.

She then wrote to her father:

'DEAR PAPA,

The vigil of my first Holy Communion day has come, a day of unbounded happiness for me. I am writing to assure you of my affection, and to ask you to pray to Jesus for me that when He comes to me for the first time, He may find me well disposed to receive all the graces He has prepared for me. I ask your pardon for having been disobedient to you, and for all the trouble I have caused you, and I beg of you this evening to forget the past and to give me your blessing.

'Your most affectionate daughter,

'GEMMA.'

The long expected day at length arrived. Gemma thus wrote of it in her Autobiography:

'Sunday morning came at last. I got up immediately and hastened to meet Jesus for the first time. All my longings were finally satisfied. I understood then for the first time the promise of Jesus: "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." I cannot express in words what passed between Jesus and me in that moment. Jesus made Himself felt, oh, so strongly, in my poor soul. I realized that the delights of heaven are not the same as those of earth. I desired intensely to make that union with God continuous. I felt

myself more and more detached from the earth and more and more disposed to recollection.'

It was related by one who had the happiness of making her first Holy Communion on the same day, that after receiving the Blessed Sacrament, Gemma said, pointing to her heart: 'I feel a fire here, I feel myself burning; do you feel like that?' Another witness deposes that Gemma made her first Holy Communion with such enthusiasm and devotion that she was unable to restrain her joy.

Two days later Gemma again received Holy Communion, this time in her own parish Church of Saint Frediano.

Gemma never forgot the impressions of that happy day. It can be said in fact that henceforward she lived only for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. For a few years she communicated once, and occasionally twice, a week, and on the other days satisfied her longings for union with Jesus by spiritual Communions, according to Sister Julia Sestini, always making more than the number suggested to the children.

The Feast of the Sacred Heart, which always reminded Gemma of her first meeting with Jesus, became her special day of devotion. Every year she used to unite herself with those who were making their first Communion, and make the spiritual exercises with them in spirit.

Fourteen years later, in 1901, when she wrote the following letter to her spiritual Director, the memory of that day was still very green:

'I do not know, Father, whether you have heard that the Feast of the Sacred Heart is indeed my Feast day. Yesterday, Father, was a heavenly day; I was with Jesus all the time, I was happy with Jesus, I wept with Jesus. An interior

recollection kept me more than usually united to my dear Jesus, but my happiness was even greater, when in the evening Jesus blessed me. I heard Him say these words:

"Dearest daughter, I am pleased with you today!" I answered: "O Jesus, would that I could please Thee always." And I cried in the depths of my heart: "Oh chilling thoughts of the world, go far from me; I want to be always with Jesus, and with Jesus alone." Poor Jesus! He abases Himself to come and dwell in this vile body of mine. And when my dear Jesus lovingly says to me that all His joy is to be with me, I ask Him: "O my Jesus, what is there in me to give Thee pleasure? You come to a soul that has a thousand times rebelled against Thee, that has in a thousand ways outraged and even dishonoured Thee! But Jesus, do You bear with me. The more I think, the more I realize that I can be happy only by casting myself upon Thine Infinite Mercy. O Jesus most merciful!" Father, where have my thoughts carried me to? To that beautiful day of my first Communion. Yesterday, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, I experienced once again the joy of that happy day. Yesterday, I again tasted the pleasures of Paradise. But what is the enjoyment of a day compared with the ages of eternity? I can say with truth that on that day of my first Communion my heart was most on fire with love for Jesus. How happy I was when with Jesus in my heart I could say: "O my God, Thy Heart is like mine; what gives Thee pleasure, can make me happy also. What then am I in need of? Nothing." If I compare the peace of heart that was mine on the day of my first Communion with that which I experience now I find no difference.'

Throughout the whole of her life she lived only for Holy Communion. 'O Jesus, what would I do if there was no Holy Communion?' she said, 'if You were not there. You, the object upon which my heart is set, how my love would languish away! If You wert in Heaven only, my heart, for certain,

would go astray. But wonders Thy Mercy has worked! I will love Thee always. When the morning dawns, when the evening darkens into night, at every hour of the day, at every moment I will love Thee always, always, always! I will never leave Thee.' She told her spiritual director that if it were possible she would live in the Tabernacle. 'And if Jesus allowed me to enter the holy Tabernacle where His Body and Blood is present, would it not be like being in Paradise?'

Gemma did indeed understand in its fullness of meaning the promise of Jesus: 'He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.' And she could repeat in all sincerity the words of Saint Paul: 'I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.'

PRECIOUS ORNAMENTS - HER GUARDIAN ANGEL CHIDES HER

When Gemma received the gold medal for Catechism from Archbishop Nicholas Ghilardi at his Palace in Lucca, she wore a specially-made frock and a necklace with a gold pendant, which her father had given her. She had also a gold watch, which, it seems, had once belonged to her mother; This is not certain, since Justina Giannini deposed in the processes that she had heard that Gemma had received as a present a gold watch from Countess Guinigi, who had been her sponsor at Confirmation, which, however, she had worn only once.

Although Gemma says in her Autobiography that she had looked forward to wearing these ornaments, so as to please her father and those at home, nevertheless on her return home as she was taking off the necklace, she saw her Angel Guardian looking severely at her. 'Remember,' he said, 'that the ornaments of a spouse of a Crucified King are thorns and the Cross.' Her Guardian then disappeared. This is the first

mention of those angelical apparitions which are such a remarkable feature of her life.

The visit and the reproof of the Angel made a deep impression. She immediately gave the offending ornaments to her brothers. 'Out of love for Jesus and to please Him, I will never wear or even speak of such vanities.' This was the resolution she then made and we know from her own words how well she kept it: 'From that day forward,' she wrote, 'I have had nothing to do with them.'

Gemma Galgani, the chosen bride of Christ, was to appear before the eyes of her heavenly Spouse, richly and splendidly arrayed in the precious ornaments mentioned by the Angel. Even at the time of the angelic visit, towards the end of 1893, the shadow of the Cross had appeared in her path, and thorns had torn her heart.

A YEAR OF DESOLATION

But it must not be thought that Gemma's life was full of that sweetness and peace of mind which she experienced on the day of her first Holy Communion; such is not the lot of those who follow the Crucified. Very soon the Divine Spouse of souls pressed to her lips that chalice of bitterness and sorrow which in her short life she drank to the very dregs. Her trial at this time was a deep dejection of mind, which she felt all the more because until now she had lived entirely and only for her heavenly Spouse. If all earthly helps and consolations were taken away, she would have accounted it as nothing, as will be seen from the following pages. But to feel no longer the presence of Jesus, to be as it were almost abandoned by Him, this was a torment too hard to bear. Those hours of desolation are terrible to souls on fire with love for God, and this trial is for them a decisive experience. If they struggle and conquer and persevere in their love, the

way of great and rapid strides towards perfection and union with God is opened to them; if they give up the struggle and lay down their arms, they take a path that leads away from God, perhaps to eternal ruin.

Though Gemma came out of this trial victorious, it was only after a long and painful struggle. Instead of having consolation and pleasure in serving God, and ease in the practice of virtue, she now experienced repugnance for prayer and every exercise of piety, and weariness and sadness. Jesus seemed far away and unreal. She wept and cried out in her anguish, but her tears were in vain. Yet she persevered. The more God seemed to fly from her, the more earnestly did she seek Him.

During the whole course of this trial, which lasted a year, Gemma, although her heart was heavy, faithfully followed the path of duty. Nevertheless, she found in herself only faults. and failings. She believed she was giving scandal to everybody and often asked pardon for this with great humility. She even wanted to make another general confession, but her confessor prudently withheld his consent. 'I tried to make another general confession,' she wrote in her Autobiography, 'but I was refused permission. I confessed to Jesus, however, and He filled me with such great sorrow that I even feel it still. I asked the teachers to forgive me for all the annoyance I caused them. But this change in me did not please my father or my brothers. I was often reproved by one of my brothers for getting up early to go to Mass. Jesus, however, from then on helped me more than ever. At that time, owing to the death of my grandfather and an uncle, two of my father's sisters came to live with us.'

Gemma, in the above passage, reveals another source of sorrow and another temptation, which might have led a

soulless strong than hers to become somewhat relaxed in the practice of piety. Her family did not understand her ever-growing desire for greater union with God, or her manner of life which was becoming every day secluded. Even her father, who was as we have seen a truly pious man, sided with the rest of the family in reproving her. They disapproved of her going to church both morning and evening, and wished her to lead what they considered an ordinary life to amuse herself, wear more fashionable clothes and to go out and about more often. It must have been a hard struggle for Gemma, but she persevered in her resolutions in the face of all opposition. To reward her fidelity God dispelled the darkness that had enveloped her and her soul, which emerged from the trial purified and strengthened. At length the attitude of her family changed and she was able to pursue in peace her pious practices.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, 1891

A long-desired opportunity to make closed retreat was offered to Gemma at this time, when the Zitine Sisters announced that a course of spiritual exercises was to be given at the College. She participated in them with zest. 'It seemed impossible,' she wrote, 'that I should ever again be able to concentrate my mind upon Jesus. I well understood that Jesus gave me this opportunity in order that I might know myself better and become purified and more pleasing to Him.'

In her Autobiography she gives the notes she took at this Retreat: they are headed thus: 'A Retreat made in the year 1891 in which Gemma must change and give herself entirely to Jesus.' Then she continues:

'I remember that the priest said: "Let us keep in mind that we are nothing and that God is all. God is our Creator; all

that we have and are comes from Him." A few days later the preacher gave a meditation on sin, and then it was that I understood how worthy of being despised by all I was, because I was so full of sin and so ungrateful to God. During the meditation on Hell I realized how much I had merited it, and I made this resolution: I will make acts of contrition during the day, especially when I have committed some fault. Finally during the last days of the Retreat we considered the examples of meekness, obedience and patience left to us by Jesus and as a result I made the following resolutions: (1) To make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament every day and to speak to Jesus more with the heart than with the tongue. (2) I will try as much as possible to speak of heavenly rather than of indifferent things.'

FURTHER TRIAL

The graces which Gemma received at this Retreat prepared her for another trial, another precious ornament with which to make herself more pleasing to her Crucified Master. This trial took the form of the early death of her brother Gino. He had also given himself entirely to God and had received Minor Orders in the Seminary of Saint Michael in Foro, where he had been for some years, when God marked him as an acceptable victim and took him to Heaven.

Gino's death was preceded by a long sickness, in which he was nursed with the most loving care by Gemma. Despising the danger of infection Gino was attacked by the same disease that killed his mother, she attended him night and day until his death in September, 1894. Her grief was so great that she became seriously ill herself and for several months came very near to death. Her father was broken-hearted. First the death of his wife, then the death of Gino had overwhelmed him with sorrow, but he could not bear the loss of Gemma.

'I cannot describe the care everyone took of me,' wrote Gemma, 'especially my father. I often saw him weep, and heard him ask Jesus to let him die instead of me.' It seems that his prayer was answered, for he died within three years, after three months of intense pain, whereas Gemma was completely restored to health.

At this point in her life we are confronted with several discrepancies in the accounts given by her biographers and the witnesses in the Processes for her Beatification. The former state that after the sickness just mentioned, Gemma left school for good, and that shortly afterwards she was taken ill with the decay, or caries, of a bone in her foot. On the other hand, Sister Julia Sestini declared that Gemma suffered from this complaint while she was still at College, and Elisa Galgani agrees with this opinion. This is the account Elisa Galgani gave in the processes:

'Gemma got ill with a bad foot. There had been a swelling on the instep, and she would have said nothing about it, if a bench had not fallen on it when she was at school with the Zitine Sisters. This accident, however, burst the tumour and she was then compelled to tell her father about it. He at once summoned a doctor who said that an immediate operation was necessary. in order to clean the wound and scrape the bone. Gemma accepted this illness and the accompanying pain with great patience and resignation, so much so that when I said to her: "You have suffered a great deal, Gemma?" she just answered with a smile. She suffered so much indeed that I could not bring myself to watch her being operated upon. My sister Elena, however, and my nephew Guido, who remained to see the operation, said that at no time did she make any complaint. When the operation was over one of the doctors, named Gianni, said to Gemma:

"Well done, Gemma: You have been very brave!" And she smiled again.'

Sister Julia Sestini remembered that when Gemma was sick all the children prayed for her, and that when she was better she came to the school to thank everybody. She even kissed her teacher. 'This was in May, I believe,' continued Sister Julia.

'When her foot was bad she suffered much, but she was calm and resigned. She had on her bed several objects of devotion, among them a Crucifix which she kissed frequently.'

From this time Gemma's path in life ran through thorny places. The further she proceeded along the road that leads to perfection, the sharper grew the thorns, so as to make her in the end the living image of her Crucified Redeemer.

AT HOME - THE ANGEL OF THE HOME

The kiss Gemma gave to Sister Julia Sestini was the final expression of her gratitude for the care bestowed upon her at the school where her soul had made such progress in virtue. Her sickness had so weakened her that the doctor advised her father to take her away from the College. She was, also, inclined to study too assiduously and frequently such remarks as these were addressed to her: 'Why so much study! Don't you know enough already?' Her father and friends, although proud of her scholastic attainments and the prizes she won, were more anxious that her health should be completely restored, and therefore welcomed the doctor's suggestion.

Gemma obeyed and settled down to the daily round in the home where she always gave 'an example of humility and

patience.' According to her brother Guido, she was always meek and submissive, the peacemaker in all their childish quarrels, 'the bearer of the olive branch.' Her Aunt Elisa reports how willingly she performed her domestic duties and that she directed her attention especially towards helping her younger brothers and sisters in every possible way, and in teaching them their prayers. 'Her example not only encouraged her brothers and sisters, but was the admiration of us, her aunts, and of her father.'

Alessandrina Maggi, a domestic servant of Gemma's uncles at Camaiore, made the following deposition:

'I know that when at her father's wish she left school and remained at home, she carried out her duties to the admiration of all, and was occupied more with her brothers' and sisters' education than with material cares. I remember that sometimes she had to suffer much from one of her sisters. She never, however, was wanting in charity, nor became impatient with her. Gemma always liked to say the morning and evening prayers with her brothers and sisters. She used to take the younger ones to Church, where every evening she taught them to say the Rosary and other family prayers.'

Guido also remembered that Gemma used to teach catechism not only to the children at home, but also to the children of the neighbourhood, and that she used to sew and embroider articles for the Church. She greatly venerated whatever pertained even indirectly to the Mass. On one occasion she made a piece of point lace to decorate an altar cloth for the private chapel of Monsignor Volpi.

SACRIFICE AND RENUNCIATION

It was not always easy for Gemma to be the bearer of the olive branch. In her home, as in every other home, the various members of the family did not always see eye to eye. One of the members of the household, irritated by the piety of Gemma and her aunts, shrugging the shoulders, used to say: 'You are hypocrites!' Others, among them one of her sisters, disliked Gemma's ways and let her know it. To all offensive remarks, however, she replied patiently and sweetly. Years later when the sister in question asked forgiveness for her unkindness, Gemma bade her forget it and think rather of being good and of not offending God.

It should be remembered that when these things were happening Enrico was either dead or was already in the grip of the terrible disease - cancer of the throat - that caused his death. Otherwise no one would have dared to treat his favorite daughter so unkindly.

Two episodes in particular caused her virtues to shine forth conspicuously, and these virtues, which were the fruit of self-sacrifice, are eminently imitable. For it must not be forgotten that, according to the witnesses in the processes, Gemma had a lively and impulsive disposition, and only appeared outwardly calm and self-possessed because of her virtue and strength of will. The first episode is thus related in the Processes:

'One of her brothers wished to attend the theatre one evening but had not enough money. Gemma tried to dissuade him from going and to put the matter out of his head. This upset him and matters were not improved by Gemma saying smilingly: "It's not worth getting upset about." His vexation then reached such a pitch that he gave her a blow in the eye that left a mark. The next day, when asked what had happened to her, she answered with wonderful reticence: "I richly deserved it."

The second episode was related by her Aunt Elisa:

'In her dealings with her brothers and sisters she was always humble, even though, as the eldest daughter, she could have insisted upon her authority being respected. One day she reproved one of her sisters for standing at the window, and tried to induce her to come away, saying: "Our brothers do not like it, and besides, it is not the proper thing for us to do." Her sister turned round and becoming violently angry, caught Gemma by the hair. The noise quickly brought my sister Elena to the scene. When Elena reproached Gemma's sister with her want of self-control and with the evil she had done, Gemma, even in these circumstances, calm and collected, intervened by saying: "Aunt, it's all right, there is nothing to worry about." Afterwards she asked us not to speak of the incident to her brother Guido, who would certainly have punished the culprit.'

In spite of her dislike of amusements Gemma knew how to adapt herself occasionally to the wishes of her brothers. Once Mgr. Volpi persuaded her to go with them and her little sisters, accompanied by an aunt, to see a children's play in which her brother Anthony was taking part. As a rule, however, she not only abstained from such amusements, but even induced others not to attend them. At home she sometimes took part with her brothers and sisters in some game or other, but it was only out of politeness.

LOVE OF HER NEIGHBOUR

Gemma's charity, which indeed made her the angel of her home, was not restricted to her family. She practiced this virtue over a wide field according to the circumstances in which she found herself. She wrote in her Autobiography:

'Every time I went out I used to ask father for money, and if, as sometimes happened, he refused I would take bread and flour and other things. And God arranged that I should often meet poor people, every time I left the house. To the poor who. came to the door I gave clothes and whatever else I had. Then my confessor forbade me to do this, and I did not do it any more, and by this Jesus worked in me a new conversion. For since my father no longer gave me money and I could not take anything from the house, when I went out and the poor came to me, I had nothing to give them. This was a great sorrow and always made me weep, that in the end I only left the house when it was absolutely necessary to do so.'

Elisa Galgani had some interesting things to say about this aspect of Gemma's life:

'She often visited the sick in the Hospital, to whom she brought a little money or something else, and whom she comforted especially by speaking of God. She also overflowed with charity for the poor and used every means in her power to help them. Sometimes she would take something from the house to take to an old man who lived at the corner of our street. At that time we ourselves were in reduced circumstances, so that I felt compelled to tell her: "There will be nothing left for our own supper." Gemma used to answer: "Providence will give us plenty." And indeed, several times things were brought to us to give to the sick or the poor. She also used to work for the poor, made them stockings and mended for them. Naturally she could not spend much money upon these charities, but she was large-hearted and longed for opportunities to work for her neighbour.'

Besides the old man already mentioned, there was a young country girl to whom Gemma gave a frock, and another

person for whom she procured some Marsala wine when he was sick. These acts of charity made her Aunt Elisa uneasy, and she told Gemma that if she continued to be so liberal she would leave nothing for herself. Gemma replied calmly that one frock was all she needed.

SPIRIT OF PIETY

Love for God was the inspiring motive behind Gemma's charity towards her neighbor. 'Her life was a continual prayer,' said Father Gentile Pardini, a Franciscan who knew her very well and who often heard her confession. 'For her the Crucifix was a book.' According to another witness Gemma's thoughts were always centered upon God. Every day she made a meditation upon one of the mysteries of Faith, most often upon the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. She was sometimes seen seated in an arm-chair rapt in profound recollection as she looked at a picture of Our Lady of Sorrows which she held in her hand. When she was ill in bed her Aunt Elisa was sometimes astonished to hear her say 'incomprehensible things.' Does this refer to ecstasies which later on became so numerous? It would seem so, if one takes into account what Gemma wrote about herself at this time. 'I began to feel another desire, a longing to love Jesus Crucified with all my heart, and to be able to help Him in His sufferings.' This desire eventually became so intense that one day on fixing her attention upon an image of the Crucified, she fell unconscious to the ground. When she recovered, her father reproved her for remaining indoors so much. There were two mornings when she could not go to Mass, and she told her father: 'I suffer when I am not near Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.' Hearing which her father became still more uneasy. She said that she then locked herself in her room and gave vent to her feelings, for the first time with Jesus alone. 'I want to follow Thee whatever the cost in suffering, to follow Thee fervently. No, Jesus, I

shall no longer displease Thee by serving Thee in a lukewarm way as I have done until now.'

This outpouring of her heart to God resulted in the following resolutions: 'Greater fervour in prayer; more frequent reception of Holy Communion; Jesus, I want to suffer, to suffer so much for Thee; prayers will be always on my lips.' And indeed occasions of suffering were not wanting. Her crucified Master bestowed these precious gifts so bountifully upon her that she could write: 'I can say with truth that since the death of mother I have not passed a day without suffering something, however little, for Jesus.'

Gemma's devotion towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was even at this time remarkable. Elisa Galgani deposed:

'Once when she was ill in bed with fever I told her that to get up too soon would make her worse. "How can I live without Jesus?" she replied. "When I have Jesus I have everything." When I had left the room she arose and went to receive Communion, in her house slippers. Afterwards I told her that I would ask Mgr. Volpi to forbid her to go. "Obedience is a holy thing," she answered, and the following morning she did not go. She made her preparation and thanksgiving for Holy Communion with great devotion, and when, owing to sickness, she was unable to make her thanksgiving in the Church she completed it at home. Sometimes after receiving Communion she went into ecstasy, or so it appeared to me.'

How great was her fervour and how deep the impression she made on those who saw her receive Holy Communion may be learned from the deposition of a convert from Protestantism, Miss Ethel Rose, a woman of great faith and piety and of an heroic spirit of charity.

'One day I saw her in the Church of Saint Michael and I was most edified at the way she received Holy Communion. I had come to go to confession to Monsignor Volpi and was waiting in the Church until my turn came, there being several persons before me. In the meantime a priest came to give Holy Communion and among those who received was a young girl who impressed me very much, not only by her modesty and recollection, but also by the extreme pallor of her face. She attracted my attention and aroused my interest so much that I watched her for about a quarter of an hour. I saw how she received Jesus and how having received Him her face flushed with burning love as she knelt in profound recollection with hands joined before her breast, her fingers entwined and her head slightly bowed. She seemed a statue.'

To complete this picture of Gemma's fervor and piety at this period of her life, a few details out of the many given in the Processes for the Beatification follow. One witness speaks of her devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and remembered that she was accustomed to say: 'The Lord indeed has taken away my mother, but He has left us the Blessed Virgin.' The Blessed Virgin was often the subject of her meditations. She made novenas in preparation for her Feasts and loved to attend sermons in her honor. Another witness spoke of Gemma's love for the saints, especially for Saint Anthony of Padua, because, she said, he was the friend of God. She liked to have pictures of the saints to distribute, so as to spread devotion to them. Elisa Galgani said about this aspect of her life:

'No matter where Gemma was she was always praying and meditating, whether it was in Church or at home, or in bed. Sometimes she used books to help her to meditate. She often said: "Mental prayer is better than vocal prayer." And I remember that during the long winter evenings she and her

sister Julia used to stop their work in turns in order to read passages from the lives of the saints. Sometimes she commented upon the reading. "See how the saints practiced penance. We must try to imitate them." And when I objected: "But they were saints!" she answered, "And we can be saints also." So that I can say that Gemma prayed without ceasing, and preached to us all, not only by example, but also by word.'

Yes, she preached. In the house she would not tolerate a doubtful book or paper. And she also knew how to console and comfort her brothers and sisters in their troubles, so that it was commonly said: 'There's no one like Gemma.'

But from Gemma's deep spirit of piety there were other fruits besides those which have been mentioned. When she was at the College of the Zitine Sisters, she became proficient at painting, some of her water-colors being so good that they were judged worthy of public exhibition. Because of this her Aunt Elisa tried to persuade her to paint a picture so as to let her father see how capable she was. But she could not be induced to do so, and she gave this as her reason: 'No, because it might afterwards be hung in the drawing-room, and everyone would see what Gemma has done. That is vanity and I do not want it. Besides, you praised me the other day for a trifle I did for you, and I did not like it because I do not wish to be praised.' On another occasion her aunt asked her to give French lessons, but the only answer she received was: 'Really, I am very ignorant.'

Another incident illustrates her angelic purity.

While her father was still living, a chemist's assistant had the audacity to address improper words to her and make improper suggestions. She was horrified and took to flight immediately, leaving the vile tempter very much confused.

Once she greatly surprised her aunt by asking her to take her to a milliner's shop. Her aunt did so, wondering all the while what was going to happen. When they reached the shop, Gemma asked for a hat with a wide rim that turned down over her face so that no one could see her face when she was out. The store owner remarked that a hat like that was not in fashion, and that it did not suit a girl who was as good-looking as she was. Gemma, however, replied: 'Make it as I ask, because I want it like that.' The reasons for this choice will be seen in the pages that follow.

THE INHERITANCE OF THE ELECT - IN THE CRUCIBLE

The years 1896 and 1897 were years of anxiety and sorrow for the Galgani family. At this time Enrico Galgani's affairs were no longer flourishing. The long sickness of his wife and of his son Gino, added to the sickness of his sister Elisa and of Gemma, exhausted his resources and he was compelled to sell not only his country house but even his home in Lucca. So dire did things become in the end that he was unable to pay Gemma's school fees and had to keep her at home. 'Gemma once told me,' deposed Sister Julia Sestini, 'that she could no longer pay the monthly pension, and I therefore spoke to the Superior about it, and she allowed her to come to the College as usual.'

But the hardest blow the family received was given by Enrico Galgani himself, unintentionally of course. He was a very charitable man, simple and incapable of deceiving anyone. His one fault was that he could not believe that anyone would deceive him. In this world there are only too many who live in bad faith and who have no scruple about the means they employ to attain their own ends. When some bills of exchange fell due, the ruin of the family was complete. All he possessed was seized. Only his religion and

the prayers of his holy daughter Gemma sustained him in this trial.

However, his affliction was so great that his health gave way and he never recovered. He developed a cancer in the throat and was in great pain. 'Gemma looked after him with all the affection of a daughter,' said Elisa Galgani, 'and made certain that he received the Last Sacraments in good time, and had all the comforts and blessings of the Church.'

Although Gemma, like all the family, had much to endure during these sorrowful days, she was always resigned to the dispositions of Providence. She herself confessed that when she saw everyone around her cast down, especially after the loss of their property, she used to go to her room, feeling herself unable to take part in such exhibitions of hopeless sorrow. On the contrary, she was inclined to be pleased that God had treated her family in that way, and thanked Him for His Goodness. Such sentiments could be felt only by one whose life was animated by the liveliest faith.

It was indeed her lively faith that sustained Gemma. This is seen in her Autobiography, where she declares in her humility that this perfect resignation to the Divine Will arose from her insensibility and hardness of heart.

'I alone was without heart and indifferent in the midst of all this sorrow. The thing that saddened the others most was that, added to the illness of my father, we were deprived of all means of support. I understood one morning the greatness of the sacrifice that Jesus was asking. I wept a great deal, but He made Himself felt so much in my soul in those days of sorrow, and my father was so resigned to die, that I was strong enough to bear this heavy misfortune calmly.'

HER FATHER'S DEATH

On 11 November 1897, Enrico Galgani died in his fifty-seventh year. A cousin of Gemma's, Luigi Bartelloni, remembered the sorrowful scene well:

'It is impossible to describe the scene that met our eyes when we reached the house, the prospect of their father's death had so cast down all the members of the family. Gemma was not weeping; rather she seemed petrified. This is not hearsay, for I saw it with my own eyes. We found the father in a comatose state. But as soon as Gemma had recovered from the first shock, she helped her brothers with all the sorrowful arrangements which have to be made in such circumstances, and she gave an example of resignation, fortitude and forethought, especially to her younger brothers and her elderly aunts.'

Gemma was not present when her father died and it was the family doctor, Del Prete, who brought her the news. Calling her aside he said he had something to tell her. 'How is father?' she asked. 'He is gone to Heaven,' was the answer. Then from her heart a cry burst forth, a cry long withheld, but which was henceforth to be always uppermost: 'Now it is time for me to be a nun.' But strong as was her will, power, nature must have its tribute also. She fainted. When she recovered she reproached herself for having allowed herself to weep, because tears are unworthy of a spouse of Jesus Crucified. She wrote afterwards in her Autobiography:

'The day father died Jesus forbade me to give way to cries and useless tears, and I passed the day in prayer, being very resigned to the will of God Who had then become my earthly Father as well as my heavenly Father.'

Elisa Galgani deposed in the Processes for the Beatification:

'Gemma felt the death of her father very much and wept a great deal, but she resigned herself to God's will and began at once to help the soul of her poor father with prayers and Communion. The morning after his death she would have liked to go to Church to receive Communion, but I said that we should receive together after the body had been removed from the house. She acquiesced in this arrangement and on the following day went to Communion, and thus began a practice she continued ever afterwards.'

CRUELTY AND HEROISM

But all the details have not yet been disclosed of what happened around the deathbed of that honest and upright man, while his seven children looked on helplessly, stunned by the blow they had received. It seems impossible that men should be so cruel, or that greed for money should so deaden the most elementary feelings of compassion.

Scarcely had the news of Enrico Galgani's death got abroad when his creditors arranged with the authorities to send police and bailiffs to close his shop and seize all his furniture. They went further. They searched the children's pockets and made them hand over every penny they had. Gemma mentioned this herself: 'They put their hands in my pocket and took the five or six soldi I had.' Cecilia Giannini, Gemma's adopted mother, who will be frequently met with in these pages, said:

'Gemma knew the name of the man who had put his hand in her pocket but she would never tell me his name. I found it out later on, and I know that he died in the hospital. Nor did she ever speak of the other creditors.'

REDUCED TO DIRE WANT

Thus the Galgani family was in the literal sense of the word thrown out on the roadside, with nothing left except their tears. To crown their misfortune their aunts, who had signed over their property to their brother, also lost all they possessed. This family of nine was therefore reduced to absolute poverty. The sad story is told by two witnesses. Cecilia Giannini deposed:

'The family was ruined and at times reduced to such straits that it was necessary to solicit help from others to beg. Elisa Galgani told me that it was she who went out to try and get something for a family that was dying of hunger, and how she met a man who gave her a franc with which she bought a loaf of bread and a few things to bring home. During the months in which Gemma came to us and returned home in the evening, she used not to stay for dinner, because we dined late, and I usually accompanied her home after Benediction. Once I said to her: "You won't be offended if I buy you a couple of eggs? You can eat them when you get home." She answered that she certainly would not be offended, so I bought them and gave them to her. I afterwards learned that she had used them to make an omelette on which the family dined. But she told me this only when I insisted, and on condition that I would not divulge it. Having thus come to know of their poverty, I used to give things to the aunts, who willingly accepted what I gave. When about to set out to accompany Gemma home in the evening, I sometimes said to her: "Do you want anything? Have you something to eat when you get home?" And sometimes she would say: "Let me have a little wine and that will do for my supper." And that was all she wanted; she used to say even that it was too much. When she reached home she would say that she had already had her supper.'

Justina Giannini on her side deposed that the Galgani family was so badly off that often they had nothing to eat, and that it was said that collections were made throughout the city for these poor people who had once known ease and comfort, and who in consequence were ashamed to beg and thus make their poverty known.

According to Elisa Galgani this state of affairs lasted a long time. 'We had nothing. The Court and the creditors took all. In the beginning we depended upon the charity of the good, but afterwards Guido got a position as chemist at the City Hospital.' Gemma, however, was not appalled by the poverty to which she and her family were reduced, because she considered poverty and the sorrows of life as precious gifts from God, as an ignored inheritance reserved by Him for the elect.

'This is the state of life God desired for us,' she often said to the family, and was content thus to fulfill the will of God. 'And not only did she love to be poor,' continued her aunt, 'but she encouraged us to love it also. And at this time we were in want even of necessities!' According to her own account she tried to bear the heaviest burdens that arose from this state of affairs and to alleviate the sufferings which the others endured as a result of their poverty. 'No matter how small it was,' said Elisa Galgani, 'Gemma always reserved the smallest portion for herself.' And another witness declared that she ate very little in order to have more to give to her brothers.

Gemma knew how to inspire others with her own confidence in God. A domestic servant from her uncle's home at Camaione, deposed:

'In these sad circumstances Gemma found a means of exciting even myself to have confidence in the Providence of

God. She used to say to me: "Say the Rosary of five decades with these words: 'Providence of God, have mercy on me.' When you have said that ten times, add: 'Providence of God, You have provided for me,' or, 'Providence of God, You will provide.'"

Gemma also expressed the same sentiments to her Aunt Elisa, 'Have patience, have patience, God will provide.' And God always did provide.

AT CAMAIORE WITH HER UNCLE AND AUNT

In order to relieve the distress of the family, at least partially, Gemma's uncle and aunt who lived at Camaiore decided to take her to live with them. She was their favorite niece. For seven or eight years Gemma had been accustomed to spend a few months every year at Camaiore with the Lencioni family, who now did their best to make her forget her recent sorrow by surrounding her with every possible care. Elisa Galgani has left us an account of this visit:

'After the death of her father, her uncle and aunt invited her to go to Camaiore so as to distract her mind and to restore her health. These our relatives were very good to the family and affectionate towards all, but especially towards Gemma. Besides they were rich and wanted Gemma to make her permanent home with them. One day her uncle said to her: "If you will remain with us I shall leave you as much money as I shall leave my other niece who lives with us." To which Gemma demurred: "Oh no! I am going to be a nun. However, if you will give me something for a dowry I shall be very grateful.'"

Her cousin Luigi Bartelloni gave the following evidence concerning her conduct during her stay at Camaiore:

'Every morning Gemma went with my sister Rosa to hear Mass and receive Holy Communion. Afterwards they attended to their household duties and served in the drapery shop with my uncle until about twelve o'clock, which was dinner time. After dinner, at about half-past twelve, they visited the Church called Badia, where they remained in prayer until a quarter to two. They then returned to the shop until about six, when they again went to pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. After the evening meal the family recited the Rosary and other prayers together and then passed about a half an hour in conversation before all retired to their rooms, and this was done with a method and a precision proper to my Uncle Dominic's home.

'I have been referring until now to Gemma's external life. What I can say about her interior life is little, but it manifests her sanctity. First of all she fulfilled with exactness, generosity and delicacy all her duties, not only towards her uncle and aunt and cousins, but also towards the domestic, Alessandrina Valsuani, and all others. Serving in the shop with her uncle and her cousin, as I have said, she had plenty of opportunity for gossiping, but she avoided the temptation by retiring to one of the upper rooms. Towards all she showed charity, respect, tolerance and politeness. Sometimes she acted as peacemaker, especially between my uncle and Alessandrina Valsuani whom she often assisted in her duties. I believe, nay, I am certain that Gemma and my sister were often so recollected in prayer when in the shop that my uncle had to reprove them. Gemma used to try very hard to reconcile my father and grandmother, whom worldly interests had estranged.'

The picture is so well drawn, and therefore we could not refrain from giving Bartelloni's evidence in its entirety, so that the reader might miss none of the perfume of Gemma's

charity in her dealings with her neighbor. Further details from the recollections of other witnesses in the Processes bring into clearer light her conduct during this short interlude in her short life.

Alessandrina Valsuani when called upon to give evidence still retained the sweet impressions which Gemma's attitude had left with her. 'Poor Gemma!' she said. 'Many times after I had shown her some kindness or other she said to me: "If I cannot reward you in this life for all you have done for me I shall reward you when I am dead." And indeed I feel that Gemma has kept her promise and thought of me. She ate very little and never made any complaint or remarked upon the food that was provided, so much so that her aunt sometimes looked after Gemma's food herself, in the hope of inducing her to eat or drink a little more. Gemma was equally indifferent to what was pleasing or displeasing to her; she never asked for anything, or desired that we should make any effort in regard to her nourishment.'

According to her cousin Luigi Bartelloni, Gemma and his sister spent nearly the whole of every Sunday and feast day in prayer in the Church. He never once heard her speak of frivolous things. 'In a word,' he concluded, 'Gemma possessed and practiced all the virtues in an extraordinary manner, a heroic manner. It can be said that there was something divine about her.'

A SEVERE JUDGEMENT OF HERSELF

Very different is the account of herself which Gemma gives in her Autobiography which, it must not be forgotten, she intended to be what she called 'the book of her sins.' 'My aunt had another niece staying with her,' she wrote, 'and we became friends. In getting into mischief we were equally proficient. Our aunt told us to go out alone together, and I

see clearly now that if Jesus had not had pity on my weakness, I should have fallen into grave sins, for the love of the world was slowly taking possession of my heart.' But who was this niece with whom Gemma declared herself to have been a competitor in mischief? Why did she speak so severely about herself?

The young girl mentioned by Gemma was the sister of Luigi Bartelloni whose evidence has been given above. Certainly from what he reported it would be very difficult to see anything wrong in their conduct. We know, however, that the saints are severe judges of themselves and their actions.

Rosa Bartelloni was an angelic creature, of the same age as Gemma and like her in many respects. When Gemma died, Rosa wept indeed, but also rejoiced because, she said, she knew her heart's friend was in Heaven and would think of her. She herself was always in delicate health and died a holy death in 1918.

Luigi and Rosa were the grandchildren of Dominic Lencioni whose daughter their father had married. On her death, however, their father married Carola Galgani, Enrico Galgani's sister.

A few more details will be added so as to understand more clearly the severity of Gemma's self judgment. Gemma had always edified the Camaione household by her many virtues, and her return each year was keenly anticipated. Her stay there is well remembered even today. 'Nearly every morning she could be seen praying in an attitude of the greatest recollection, yet without affectation. The way she was dressed, almost like a nun, attracted one's attention. Besides the Collegiata, she used also to attend the Badia where her confessor, Canon Dominic Masini, was stationed, being then in charge of that venerable Sanctuary. There are

many who remember finding Gemma Galgani kneeling before the altar of the Pieta, and leaving her there. Sandrina Maggi, then Valsuani, formerly a domestic servant at the Lencioni home, and one who was in Gemma's confidence, declared that Gemma often told her that when kneeling before the Pieta she experienced a great and almost irresistible feeling of love for the Passion of Jesus Christ and the sorrows of His holy Mother, along with a feeling of distaste for everything life offered to youth, and that before that image she had sworn to give herself entirely and forever to God.

'Sandrina Maggi maintained relations with Gemma until her death, and she records with emotion her beautiful gifts of mind and heart, in particular her desire to help the needy. One evening when passing along the Vado road, they met an old woman who asked an alms of them, saying that she was suffering from the cold because she was insufficiently clad. As it happened that very morning Gemma had finished renovating a heavy under-skirt which her aunt had given her. Seeing a sheltered doorway, she entered it and taking off the under-skirt gave it to the old woman, saying: "Pray for me that the Lord may set me on fire with His love." She was clever at everything a woman should know how to do. Sandrina Maggi possessed a well worked out design for a coverlet Gemma had made, which was exhibited when her evidence was taken during the Processes for the Beatification.'

ALL FOR JESUS AND HIM ALONE

After her father's death, however, Gemma disliked living at Camaiore. The crosses received again and again from the hand of God had more and more detached her heart from the world, and had filled her with an indescribable longing to raise herself as far above earth as she could and to unite

herself with God. She did not feel at home in a drapery shop, notwithstanding the affection and piety of her relatives. So she spent the greater part of the day away from the shop. Furthermore, she was in a sad state of spiritual aridity, and felt in great need of Monsignor Volpi's help. But he was far away in Lucca. What was she to do - go back home?

Gemma was neither tall nor thin, according to Sister Gesualda who knew her, but good-looking, attractive, with fine features, big, luminous eyes, an enchanting smile, and a sweet expression. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that several men should fall in love with her. Already at Lucca, when she was about sixteen years of age, when her father was still alive, she was sought after officially by a young cavalry lieutenant. Elisa Galgani tells the story:

'I used to accompany Gemma to the College of the Zitine Sisters. One day Gemma said to me: "Come with me always to the gate, because there" - she pointed to a corner of the street - "that silly fellow awaits my coming and stares at me." One day when I was taking Gemma for a walk, I was stopped by a lieutenant whom I recognized as the man whom she had called a "silly fellow." He said: "Signora, I wish to speak to you." "Speak," I answered, "what do you want?" "I should like to become betrothed to that young girl who is standing by. Please, I am serious. Is she your daughter?" To which I replied: "She is still but a child, and besides she does not want to be married." The lieutenant stood frowning for a while and then exclaimed: "I am very sorry. She appears to be such a good girl. And I am a respectable young man and come from a good family. If you want to know about me I will tell you who I am and about my family, and where we live." But Gemma came up to me hastily and said: "Let us go, let us go home." We went, as usual, to a church to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and say our prayers. I noticed that for some time the lieutenant followed Gemma. He contented

himself, however, with passing the house and looking up at the windows, at which no one appeared. When these things were known Gemma used to say to me: "I don't want any men around."

At Camaiore young man of distinguished family fell in love with Gemma, and came with his father to interview her uncle. This turn of events appeared to be a providential means of retrieving the fortunes of her family. But Gemma already had given her life to her Crucified Savior, and her desires were not those of earth. It is easy to imagine the efforts that were made to change Gemma's mind, but none of them succeeded in altering her determination to give no love a place in her heart save the love of Jesus.

There was another young man from Camaiore, a chemist, who wanted to marry Gemma. Let Alessandrina Valsuani, a witness well known to the reader, tell this incident in her own words:

'This man went so far as to ask me to tell Gemma that he loved her. When I scornfully refused to do that, he had the effrontery to write a letter to her and to make me be the bearer of it. Gemma, with an expression of disgust and disapproval, said: "Look at that foolish fellow! Wait a moment, I will write a few words to him and you can take the letter to him." But when I refused to take it she thought for a moment and then said: "I shall go myself," and she tore up the letter. And, indeed, Gemma went with me to the garden of a man named Ghivizzona, whose house was near to the chemist's shop and to our house. I told Ghivizzona that Gemma wished to speak to a young man from the chemist's and that she would be obliged if he would allow them to meet in his garden in his presence. Then leaving Gemma and Ghivizzona together, I went to the chemist's to tell the young man. "Gemma wants to speak to you," I said, "and

she is with Ghivizzona in his garden waiting for you. Go, she expects you." He went at once and found Gemma where I said. I was not present at the meeting because I went to tell her aunt what had happened. But I had hardly done this when I returned to Ghivizzona's garden. Gemma was already on her way home. The young man had returned to the shop. As soon as she saw me (Ghivizzona was still with her) Gemma exclaimed: "You will see whether I shall be left alone. Do you know what I said to him? I told him not to think of me, not even to look at me, because I belong to Jesus, and that all my thoughts and affections were for Him alone." And indeed the young man, although I believe he continued to think of her, manifested his regard for her.'

RETURN TO LUCCA

All these happenings saddened Gemma and made her long for the poverty of her own home where at least she would be free from such importunities. But it was not going to be easy to find an excuse to return home. The affection her uncle and aunt bore her was one of the chief difficulties. Therefore with lively faith she began to beg of God, as sometimes in the early centuries of the Church the virgins and martyrs begged of God, to come to her aid and to free her, even at the cost of her health, from the dangers which threatened her. And God heard her prayer. She was struck down with a serious illness. 'All of a sudden,' she tells us, 'I began to suffer from curvature of the spine and to experience violent pains in my back.'

To Gemma this seemed a suitable opportunity for suggesting to her relatives the advisability of returning home to her own family. She had made up her mind to do so and nothing could turn her from her decision. All were sorrow stricken, and even her Uncle Dominic, reputed to be an unemotional man, shed tears, but they had to yield to her wishes.

So Gemma returned to Lucca, where her illness, far from being cured, grew steadily worse owing to the privations necessarily imposed by the poverty of her family.

FROM DEATH TO LIFE - NAILED TO THE CROSS WITH JESUS

Elisa Galgani was very surprised at Gemma's return to Lucca; not that she was not glad to see her, but the poverty of the home was so great! Furthermore, she did not appear to be in good health. Elisa Galgani therefore could not refrain from putting a leading question. 'Oh! Why have you come back, Gemma? Perhaps they did not treat you well?' 'Yes, I was treated well and I am well, but you know, there were persons there who wanted to marry me. But I want to belong entirely to Jesus.'

'At home Gemma once more began her daily round of household duties and her practices of piety. But the illness that showed itself at Camaiore continued its implacable course. The pains in her back became so severe and the spinal curvature so marked that she was compelled to make her sufferings known to her aunt. The evil, however, had made great progress before she spoke about it. Elisa Galgani decided that a doctor should be summoned, but she hesitated somewhat because of Gemma's modesty. As a child Gemma had been struck by the words of Saint Paul, the Apostle: 'Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost.' Ever since that time she had guarded her body with the utmost jealousy. She did not allow herself even now to look so as to find out what might be the cause of her present suffering. No wonder her aunt hesitated to send for a doctor. Gemma experienced a feeling of extreme repugnance at the very idea. She mentions these details herself in her Autobiography:

'Already for a long time I had felt pain in that part, but I did not want to touch it or look at it, because when I was a little child I had heard in a sermon that our bodies were the temples of the Holy Ghost. These words impressed me, and so far as I have been able I have carefully guarded my body. What agony I suffered when I had to submit to a medical examination. Every time I heard the doctor coming I used to cry.

But Gemma's condition was growing worse. She was now subject to violent headaches. She became deaf. Her hair fell out, and her members became paralyzed. The doctor was sent for. Elisa Galgani made good use of the authority she had over Gemma, for she knew that her desire to be obedient was the only means of overcoming her repugnance to seeing a doctor.

At his first examination, the doctor, his name was Del Prete, found that Gemma had an advanced abscess in the lumbar region, which seemed to communicate with the spine. To make sure he decided upon a consultation, and the result was a verdict that she was suffering from tuberculosis of the spine, a serious disease and very difficult to cure.

The first abscess was followed by another. It was lanced again and again and medicated glycerine injected into it. When Gemma heard that among other remedies the doctor intended to try the cauterizing iron, she asked him smilingly as if the question referred to some other person: 'Doctor, are you going to do the cauterizing?' During that operation the patient, as is easy to understand, suffers a great deal, but on the testimony of the doctors Gemma never uttered a word, and bore the pain calmly and almost with indifference.

These remedies made her no better, and she passed her days and nights lying in the same position, unless someone

helped her to change it. And in this state she remained for a year. After the operation referred to above she had to wear an iron corset, which had to be ordered from a man in Pisa named Redini, who came on purpose to Lucca to fit it on. It was very heavy and uncomfortable according to Elisa Galgani - and Gemma, who wore it day and night with only her hands free, was as it were crucified.

The financial state of the family had not improved during this time. Far from becoming better, things had come to such a pass that it was impossible to find a person who was willing to lend them anything. To find money to provide the remedies prescribed for Gemma was not the greatest hardship, however. Gemma's known virtue brought to her bedside a number of visitors who liked to be edified by the sight of her patient endurance of such terrible sufferings. But no one was allowed to know the extent of the family's poverty. Gemma did not speak of it because, loving to suffer, she did not wish to be deprived of this means of making herself more like her crucified Spouse. The others did not speak of it because the memory of the ease and comfort they had once enjoyed filled them with an extreme repugnance to make known their present misery.

A SCHOOL OF VIRTUE

Even in her poverty Gemma found a means of giving alms. The following is an account of her charity given by Elisa Galgani:

'She was always praying for sinners, and often said to me: "You ought to pray for them also, because if you save a soul you will go to heaven." My nephew Anthony who used to be at the Giannini Pharmacy found out that the water woman who brought water to our house was living in sin with a certain man. He therefore wanted to dismiss her there and

then, but spoke of the matter only to Gemma and me. "Let me speak to her," Gemma said .. "Why send her away without giving her time to reflect? Jesus did not send Mary Magdalen away, but received her kindly." Her brother said: "Do as you like." The next day the water carrier came and Gemma spoke to her kindly about the evil life she was leading. The woman admitted the evil, but said that she was living with him because he paid the rent. Gemma answered: "If that is the reason, I shall pay the rent myself, provided you leave that man, and that you go to confession to the Father Prior of Saint Peter's here in Lucca and return to the friendship of God." The woman did as she had promised and never ceased to thank Gemma for the grace she was the means of obtaining for her. She used to say: "She is a saint. I used to think it was impossible to forsake the life of sin into which I had fallen." True to her word Gemma as long as she lived paid the woman's rent from the little money she received every month from her aunt at Camaione. She never lost sight of her and saw to it that she was given a cup of coffee every morning.'

The names of only a few of those who visited Gemma during her illness will be mentioned. Sister Mary Angela Ghiselli, of the Nursing Sisters of Saint Camillus, deposed that in the midst of all her sufferings Gemma never uttered a word of complaint, but was always the same, patient, silent and good. Palmira Valentini is another whose name will be met with frequently in these pages. She has left us an account of how she first came to visit Gemma during this illness.

'Victoria Mallegni spoke to me about her,' she explained. 'I went without any introduction to see her in her home in the Via del Biscione. She welcomed me kindly, and asked me if I went to Holy Communion every day. When I answered yes, she gave me a smile of pleasure and praise.' When Gemma was restored to health, she returned these numerous visits to Palmira Valentini, who has declared that when Gemma

came to her house, she felt she was unworthy of having such a visitor.

Another who helped Gemma by her visits was Signora Martinucci. She it was who, with the intention of encouraging her to pray for a cure, lent her the Life of Saint Gabriel, the Passionist - at that time not yet beatified - who was filling the world with the fame of the miracles worked at his tomb. The book belonged to Cecilia Giannini, who later on was to play such an important part in the life of Gemma, although as yet she did not know her. This is Cecilia Giannini's account of how the book came into Gemma's hands - until this time Gemma had not even heard of Saint Gabriel.

'In the beginning I was acquainted with neither Gemma nor her family, though I often heard a certain chemist named Galgani spoken of. The first time I heard the family mentioned was when Gemma was sick and her aunts sent to me to ask for a relic of Saint Gabriel who was then only Venerable. I did not know the aunts to speak to then, but I sent the relic and some pictures of the saint. I had lent the Life of Saint Gabriel to Signora Martinucci, who is now dead, and she sent to ask me if she might lend it to a sick girl who was very anxious to have it. I agreed and she kept it for some months. When it was not returned I asked Signora Martinucci to get it for me. I found out afterwards that Gemma felt the parting with it so much that she wept.'

Another visitor who saw Gemma frequently was her former school teacher, Sister Julia Sestini. She deposed in the Processes:

'At the unveiling of the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, about 1899, I met Gemma's aunt, who told me that she was ill and that she would like to see me. I asked permission of

the Superior and then I went to see her on Thursday and Sunday during the walk hour. We made triduums and novenas together, but she used to say to me that it didn't matter whether she got better or not, provided Jesus was pleased. It was at this time that I gave her a little blessed Crucifix, and she afterwards told me that she had received signal graces through it. The last novena we made was to the Sacred Heart and to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque.'

The name of Saint Margaret Mary was as new to the servant of God as that of Saint Gabriel. Her confessor, Monsignor Volpi, who was at this time spiritual director to the Visitation Nuns at Lucca, had spoken about her, and so had Don Andrew Bartoloni, the parish priest of Saint Frediano's, who came frequently to visit her and to bring her Holy Communion. The latter deposed:

'Every Saturday I brought her Holy Communion. She used to go to confession to Monsignor Volpi, who is my cousin. She was attacked by a disease which some said was spinal; others said it was paralysis, others Pott's disease. I could not say exactly. It was for the fifteen Saturdays called the Saturdays of Pompeii that I brought her Holy Communion. I brought her Holy Communion on a few other occasions, for she was ill for many months. On one occasion when I visited her I had just returned from France, where I had said Mass at Paray-le-Monial. She seemed very interested in the Sanctuary there and asked me about the devotion to Blessed Margaret Mary which was practiced there.'

And while Don Andrew Bartoloni was answering Gemma's questions, on his side he received, in compensation, great edification. He tells us this himself:

'Through her illness she was, as it were, rigid. She could raise only her head and shoulders a little. She used to say to

me: "See, I am crucified; I cannot move." But nevertheless she never uttered a word of complaint. She was always jovial, smiling and peaceful. It seemed to me that she had a most extraordinary resignation. She had her Rosary or a holy picture always in her hand or under her pillow. Even the family seemed peaceful, because Gemma was so calm. Sometimes when I was leaving the house, they said to me: "Isn't Gemma very resigned?"

REPROOF AND COMFORT FROM ABOVE

Before continuing Gemma's story, it is necessary to go back a little in order to follow the different phases of her illness. She suffered a great deal not only from the actual pains of her disease, but also from the straitened circumstances of the family. Sometimes she thought she detected a certain weariness in the general demeanor of those about her. 'Even Aunt Elisa,' she said, 'appears to care for me no longer, but it is the will of God.' Her Divine Spouse, however, Who desired to make His chosen one a woman truly strong, reproved her for these outbursts. This is how Gemma referred to it:

'One morning after I had received Holy Communion at home, I was particularly conscious of the presence of Jesus within me. He reproved me severely, saying that I was a weak soul. "It is your wicked self-love," He said, "that is the cause of your being annoyed when you cannot do what others can do, and the cause of your feeling confused when you have to accept the help of others. If you were dead to yourself you would not be so upset."

From that day Gemma in the midst of her sufferings lived in entire abandonment to the will of God.

The biography of Saint Gabriel which Signora Martinucci lent to Gemma did not at once excite her to direct any

devotion to him. She took the book, put it under her pillow, and thought very little about it, even though she knew that her family were praying to him for a cure. But one day she was more than usually depressed, a profound melancholy having taken possession of her. The enemy of souls who had provoked this tempest filled her mind with wicked suggestions: 'If you will only listen to me, I shall free you from all your pains, cure you and make you happy.' At the height of the struggle when, according to herself, she was almost on the point of yielding, realizing who the tempter was she remembered Saint Gabriel and the power he had with God. She invoked his aid, crying out: 'The soul first and then the body!' The Devil did not give in, but made another furious assault. Gemma, making the Sign of the Cross, again invoked Saint Gabriel, and immediately a deep calm inundated her soul.

It was now that Gemma, after thus experiencing the efficacy of Saint Gabriel's intercession, remembered his biography. She began to read it with the greatest enthusiasm. The following is her own account:

'I remember that I began to read the Life of Confrater Gabriel that same evening. I read it many times. I never grew tired of reading it and of admiring his virtues. From the day on which my new protector had saved my soul, I began to have a special devotion to him. I could not go to sleep unless I had a picture of him under my pillow, and from that time I began to see him near me. I cannot explain what I mean here; I felt his presence; at all times, in every action, Confrater Gabriel came to my mind.'

Soon, however, she had to return the biography to Signora Martinucci, but in parting with it, she wept. But Saint Gabriel, to compensate and comfort her on the loss of the

book, appeared to her. This is how she describes the incident:

'But that Saint of God wished to reward the little sacrifice I made, and in a dream that night he appeared to me all clothed in white, but I did not recognize him. Noticing that I did not know him, he opened his white robe, and allowed me to see his Passionist habit. Then I soon recognized him. I remained silent before him. He asked me why I had wept when I had to give up his Life. I did not know what to answer, but he said to me: "Be good, and I shall come back to see you."

So under the auspices of Saint Gabriel began the great and extraordinary favors that were to mark the rest of Gemma's life - ecstasies, visions, raptures, apparitions of angels; saints, the Blessed Virgin, and even of Christ Himself.

On the vigil of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1898, she had as usual a visit from the Barbantine Sisters, who brought with them a postulant who was too young to receive the habit. Upon seeing her Gemma experienced an unusual emotion. Never before had she felt like that, and she took it as an inspiration from Heaven, and made up her mind that if she was cured she would imitate her. Gemma spoke of this intention to Sister Leonilda, the Mistress of Novices, who made her a promise that she would be clothed in the habit at the same time as the young postulant. When Monsignor Volpi came that same day to hear her confession, she told him of her decision. He not only approved of it, but allowed her to do what she had long desired, to make a perpetual vow of virginity. It is impossible to describe the joy that filled her soul upon receiving this permission. Hitherto she had indeed lived only for Jesus, but now she would be bound to Him by new ties - by ties that would never be broken. She had reached the pinnacle of her desire.

A sweet calm overflowed her soul, and as she thought of the following morning when with Jesus in her heart she would take the longed-for vow, she felt a strange sense of well-being stealing over her limbs, and then before her, she saw Saint Gabriel. 'Gemma,' he said, 'take of your own free-will a vow to become a religious, but add nothing further.'

Gemma did not understand what these words meant, and asked why her vow was to be thus limited. The Saint did not reply except to say: 'Sorella mia' (my sister). 'I did not understand all this, but to thank him I kissed his habit.'

Thereupon Saint Gabriel gave her the sign of the Passion which Passionists wear upon their habits. 'And again,' continues Gemma, 'he called me "Sorella mia" and then disappeared.' On the following morning after Holy Communion she pronounced her vows. That day was for her a heavenly feast.

RECOVERY HOPELESS - NOVENA SUGGESTED

A little less than a month later, however, Gemma's health had shown no improvement. The doctors tried a new operation and applied the cauterizing iron to twelve places along her spine. The heroic girl, more solicitous for the preservation of her modesty than for the restoration of her bodily health, underwent this operation without the aid of a general anesthetic. This happened on 4 January 1899. On 28 January another complication set in to aggravate the condition of the poor sufferer. A tumour on her head caused violent spasmodic pains. The doctors again met in consultation, but on account of her extreme weakness, decided that nothing could be done for her and that she was doomed.

Nothing remained for Gemma now except to wait for death in the midst of her sufferings. On February 2 she received the Viaticum. 'I went to confession,' she said, 'and then waited for the moment when I should be united with Jesus. 'But how slow it was! The doctors, believing that I could no longer hear, said among themselves that I could not survive midnight.'" The doctors were wrong and the malady pursued its relentless course.

On 19 February Monsignor Volpi visited her, and suggested that she should make a novena to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. Gemma was not enthusiastic. She would have longed to be cured had not her soul been so filled with desire for union with God. As she had already said, it did not matter whether she was cured or not provided God was pleased. But in obedience to her confessor, she began the novena. She forgot all about it the next day, and then began over again, only to forget it in the same way.

DIVINE INTERVENTION

After the second breaking - of the novena, she began for the third time on February 23. This is her own account of what happened:

'On the 23rd I began for the third time, that is I intended to begin it, but it was now only a few minutes to midnight, and I heard the sound of a Rosary and I felt a hand placed on my forehead. A voice then began to say the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be to the Father, nine times. I hardly knew what to say I was so weak with pain. The same voice that had said the Our Father, asked me: "Do you wish to be cured?" "It is all the same to me," I replied. "Yes," he continued, "you will be cured. Pray with faith to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Every evening until the end of the novena I shall come and we shall pray together to the Sacred Heart."

"And what about Blessed Margaret Mary?" I asked. "Add the Glory be to the Father three times in her honour."

'This I did for nine evenings in succession.

The same person (it was Saint Gabriel) came every evening and placed his hand on my forehead as before. We recited together the Our Father to the Sacred Heart, and then he made me add the Glory be to the Father in honor of Blessed Margaret Mary. The novena was to end on the first Friday of March. I sent for the priest the evening before and went to confession. Early the following morning I received Holy Communion. O what happy moments I spent with Jesus! He said to me: "Gemma, do you wish to be cured?" I was so overcome with emotion that I could not speak. Poor Jesus! The grace was granted; I was cured. That morning I wept with Jesus, and Jesus, always good, always tender, was saying: "I shall always be with you, my daughter. I am thy father," and, pointing to Mary the Mother of Sorrows, "she will be your mother. A father's help will never be wanting to whoever puts himself in My hands. Although I have taken away from you every support and consolation on earth, nothing will ever be wanting to you."

Gemma was indeed cured. 'Two hours later I got up,' she tells us. 'All at home were weeping for joy. I was pleased, not because I had regained my health, but because Jesus had chosen me for His daughter. And, indeed, before leaving me that morning He had said very clearly to my heart:

"To the grace I have given you this morning others greater will be added."

Elisa Galgani deposed that after receiving Holy Communion, Gemma asked for her clothes in order to get dressed. But her aunt was afraid to do her bidding, believing her to be

delirious. It was her little sister Julia who finally gave them to her.

Sister Julia Sestini had also suggested that Gemma ought to make a novena, and she advised that it should be made to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. The following is what she deposed in the Processes:

'I said to her: "Gemma, I know that a miracle by Blessed Margaret is needed for her canonization. Let her perform one for you and they will make her a saint." We agreed that this novena should end on the first Friday of March. The prayers were only a few Our Fathers. I brought her the Manual of our holy foundress. It was entitled "Preghiamo" and contained the Holy Hour, which I made Gemma promise to practise every first Thursday of the month. The novena began on Thursday, and I went to visit her on the following Sunday. "Do you know with whom I am making the novena?" she asked me. "With your aunts or your sisters," I replied. Smilingly she answered: "No," adding: "With little Confrater Gabriel who comes to help me to say the Our Fathers." To which I replied: "Isn't the Lord good to send His saints just as He sends our guardian angels to us?"

'She spoke so calmly and simply that I could not doubt then and I do not doubt now that she was in her normal state of mind, and that she was telling the truth. This conversation between Gemma and myself was short, for the other Sister was talking with Gemma's aunt at the time. I visited her again on the following Thursday, the eighth day of the novena, when she again stated that Confrater Gabriel had been with her during all the novena helping her to say the prayers. And I remember with certainty that she told me in these very words that "Jesus also made His presence felt." She was nevertheless always calm and serene. "Who knows what will happen tomorrow?" she said to me. And in this way

one may say she allowed to appear her certain conviction of her cure. She was so certain about it that I said: "If anything does happen tomorrow tell them to call me!" The next day I received a message from our Mother Foundress: "Have you heard? Gemma is cured and wants to see you. You may go after school." So after four o'clock I went. Her aunts told me that Gemma had been up, but that for safety's sake they had made her go back to bed. Gemma got up and sitting on the bed embraced me, saying: "Jesus has granted the grace." Then in a low voice she told me of the promise she had made to make the Holy Hour every Thursday, explaining that she had made it the evening before when Jesus had caused a feeling of emotion in her heart.'

This long deposition has been set down in its entirety because it mentions Gemma's great devotion to the Holy Hour, during the practice of which she was to receive extraordinary favors from God, as will presently be seen.

The cure that was in everyone's opinion instantaneous and complete, was preceded and accompanied by heavenly communications. For instance, Letizia Bertuccelli, formerly a servant in the Galgani home, spent a night near Gemma in order to assist the aunts in taking care of her. In her evidence Letizia stated that on the night the miracle happened, she saw Gemma's room filled with an unusual bright light, so bright indeed that she ran to call the aunts that they might see it also. On the same occasion she heard Gemma talking with a person she could not see. The following are the words she heard: 'If you are cured will you become a nun? Yes, indeed, but now that my parents are dead, I am in want of everything that is necessary. That does not matter, because the Lord will provide. And if it should happen that you cannot be a nun or that the nuns should decline to have you, I shall find persons who will take care of you, and who will give you all that will be necessary.' These

words have been italicized because they seem to be a prophecy of what did actually happen to Gemma.

Letizia Bertuccelli came to see Gemma the following day and meeting on the stairs a number of people who were going up and down, she asked if Gemma was dead, but received no answer. When she entered the room and saw the crumpled bed, she began to think that Gemma was indeed dead and burst out crying. But Gemma, who had been sitting in a corner of the room, came over to her and said that thanks to the Blessed Virgin she was alive. Then she continued: 'You were very much afraid yesterday evening! But until I am professed you will say nothing to anyone about what you saw.' That day, however, was never to arrive.

Gemma's miraculous cure was soon known throughout Lucca, and for a while everyone was talking about it. For many years she was known as 'la ragazzina della grazia' the little girl who received the heavenly favour; by all but a few she was called by that name. Even the doctors who had given her up were astonished when they heard that she was out of danger and that she was perfectly restored to health. One of them wished to test the reality of the cure himself and visited her. 'How are you, Gemma?' he asked. 'So you don't need me any more.' When Gemma replied that that was so, he went away and never returned.

Another of the doctors was astonished when he heard the news from Elisa Galgani. It was Doctor Tommasi who had operated on Gemma the day before the cure, and diagnosed the latest complication as 'A purulent condition of the ear, with acute inflammation affecting the mastoid gland, and with perforation and inflammation of the membrane of the middle ear.' When he saw Gemma on the evening following the miracle, and verified the complete nature of the cure, he

said nothing except these words: 'Pray for me, Gemma.' And he, too, went away and never came back.

Six days after her cure Gemma wrote to tell a relative of the grace she had obtained: 'Let whoever read these lines know that I have been granted the cure of my soul and body, not through my own merits, but through the prayers of so many good people who have had pity on me. I could not have obtained anything.'

Holy and precious humility! how pleasing both to God and men.

SEEKING THE WAY - HER HEART'S DESIRE

Having been cured in such an extraordinary way from a disease that would certainly have caused her death, Gemma henceforth considered that her life was not her own, but belonged to God to Jesus, towards whom all her aspirations were now directed. For her a new life was opening, a life more angelical than human. Our minds must be raised high above the earth in order to follow with the eyes of Faith the heavenly flights of her soul. Nearer and nearer she approached the eternal Sun of Justice, allowing nothing to distract her attention or delay her progress, until she should reach her goal and blissfully lose herself in God.

Gemma's first thought upon regaining her health was to consecrate herself to God in the religious state. She spoke to her family about it and received no opposition, although maybe they thought that in view of her past illness, it might not be easy to carry out her intention.

It was of course natural that Gemma should desire to become a religious. Nevertheless her vocation seemed rapt

in mystery. The question on which she had to make up her mind was what order she should select.

Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, a Visitation nun, had had an important part in her cure, and it seemed to Gemma that out of gratitude she to embrace the kind of life the Saint had followed. For the same reason Monsignor Volpi urged her to take this step. It would appear that Heaven was leading her towards the Convent of the Visitation.

On the day of her cure, before she got up, a voice had said to her: 'Renew all the promises you have made, and add that in the month consecrated to Him you will also consecrate yourself entirely to Him.' In an account written six days after her cure, she confessed: 'I should like to flyaway immediately to where Blessed Margaret Mary wishes me to be. a how badly off are those who live in the world! From the moment I left my bed I have experienced an aversion for everything, an aversion I cannot explain.' Whilst she was thus feeling a distaste for everything that did not concern God, she also had an immense hunger for Him, that is, for Holy Communion, a hunger she thought she could never appease except in the religious state.

On 10 March, therefore, Gemma went to the Visitation Convent to thank her heavenly benefactress, and to ask her - these are her own words that everything might be arranged for the best, that is, as she explained, that she might be able to shut herself within the walls of that Convent. Because it seemed so long to wait until June, the nuns promised that they would take her in the month of May, and that in June, if she so desired and if she had a true vocation, they would receive her into the Convent for good.

AT THE FEET OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

The long days from March to the beginning of May passed, and finally Gemma found herself within the Convent. To compensate her for the pain of that time of waiting, God had showered upon her an abundance of heavenly graces. On Holy Thursday she wished to make the Holy Hour that had recently been taught to her by Sister Julia Sestini. Making the Holy Hour for the first time in good health, she wished to prepare for it by a general confession of her whole life. The following is her own description of what took place on that occasion:

'I began therefore to make the Holy Hour for the first time out of bed, but I felt such an intense sorrow for my sins that I spent days of continual martyrdom. In the midst of this sorrow, however, I had one consolation, one source of relief, namely, tears. I passed the whole hour praying and weeping. Being extremely tired I sat down, the feeling of sorrow continuing. A few moments later I felt my whole being wrapped in recollection. Then, all of a sudden, I began to lose the use of my senses. I tried with all my strength to get up to lock the door of my room. Where was I? I found myself there and then before Jesus Crucified. Blood was flowing from all His wounds. I lowered my eyes immediately, and feeling very much disturbed I made the Sign of the Cross. Great peace of mind followed, but I continued to experience intense sorrow for my sins. Lacking courage I did not raise my eyes to look at Jesus. I bent down with my forehead upon the ground, and remained in that position for several hours. Then I recovered, but from that time I began to have a great horror for sin, and this is the biggest grace that Jesus has granted me. The Wounds of Jesus remained so that I have never since then forgotten them.'

Such was the impression that Jesus, covered with blood, made upon her that she determined to Him with all her heart, no matter what the cost. At the same time there arose

in her heart the desire, to suffer for Him Who had suffered so much for her. And Gemma's resolutions were no mere idle words.

On the following day, Good Friday, Gemma, after spending the whole day, no doubt, in union with Jesus in His Passion, wished to take part in the devotions of the Three Hours Agony, but being unable to obtain permission, she decided to go through the devotions privately in her own room.

She herself tells us what happened in that short space of time:

'It was the first time, and the first Friday that Jesus made Himself felt so strongly in my soul. Although I had not received Holy Communion - because it was impossible - from the hands of a priest, Jesus Himself came to me and communicated Himself to me. So intimate was this union that I remained lost in amazement. Oh how forcibly did Jesus speak to my soul!

In the days before Gemma's entry into the Convent, Jesus often spoke to her. According to her own words 'Jesus in His infinite goodness was not ashamed to humble Himself' and become her teacher. And what were the teachings of this sublime Master? One April evening when Gemma was alone in her room Jesus Crucified appeared and pointing to His open Wounds, said: 'Look, My daughter, and learn how to love! This Cross, these thorns, these nails, these bruises, these scars, these wounds, this blood - these are the effects of an infinite love! See to what extent I have loved thee! Do You really desire to love Me? Learn how to suffer first-suffering will teach thee how to love.'

At this awful sight Gemma swooned, but there was then enkindled in her heart a burning fire of love that would

never be extinguished.

WITH THE VISITANDINE RELIGIOUS

At last the long expected day arrived. On 1 May, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Gemma entered the Convent. To her it seemed like going to Heaven. A course of spiritual exercises was being given at the time, and Gemma, in order to take part in them with great recollection, told her family that she did not wish to be visited.

To tell the truth, if Gemma was ardently desirous of becoming a Visitandine, the nuns on their side were just as anxious to have her among them. They had heard about her virtues, and they knew that she had been miraculously cured through the intercession of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. In the hope that this miracle would hasten the canonization of their Sister, they looked forward to hearing from Gemma's own lips an account of her cure .. To facilitate her entrance into their order they were willing to dispense with the usual dowry, being satisfied with the great fund of virtue with which her soul was endowed.

At the Convent Gemma was treated with every care, one might say with veneration. Exceptions to the general rule were made for her. She had not to attend the exercises of the retreat like the other externs, but was allowed to follow the regular observance of the Community. Even the Superior displayed her esteem and made Gemma sit beside her in the refectory, and during the day often called her aside to speak to her.

During all this time the Lord was pouring His grace and consolation more abundantly in Gemma's heart. 'Jesus in spite of my misery,' she wrote:

'I consoled me and made Himself continually felt within my soul.'

But Gemma was not altogether satisfied. The life of the Visitation nuns, she felt, was not for her. She had need of a more austere mode of life. But where would she go? Would she not have to return to the world in order to find another religious order more in keeping with her desires - to the world that was now so far away? And then to what order? She was in a religious house now, at any rate, and that was better than going back into the world. However God had not destined her to become a Visitandine. And He would bring about the accomplishment of His designs in her regard.

At Gemma's request the nuns approached Archbishop Ghilardi for permission to accept her, a permission he did not wish to grant. He hesitated because of her delicate health. The only favour he would grant was that she might stay in the convent until 21 May in order to be present at the profession of several novices. Gemma, however, was not told of this decision until the very last moment. She was so impressed by the ceremony that forgetful of herself she continued her prayers until the afternoon, when nature got the upper hand and she felt she was going to faint. The nuns, upset over their forgetfulness, tried immediately to make reparation for their neglect.

The Superior then called Gemma and with regret told her of the Archbishop's decision. Gemma felt it very much. In an instant all her hopes were dashed to the ground. But she was as usual resigned, knowing that God would manifest His will. 'At five o'clock in the evening of 21 May 1899, I had to leave,' she wrote in her Autobiography. 'Weeping I asked the blessing of the Mother Superior and said good-bye to the nuns. My God, what sorrow.'

To alleviate Gemma's sorrow somewhat, the nuns held out the hope that she would later on be accepted. She was therefore constantly at the convent to inquire whether the Archbishop had yet given the desired consent. She still remembered, no doubt, that her Divine Master had told her that she was to lead a more austere life. But she was so anxious to leave the world that she felt compelled to go every day to the convent. But instead of diminishing, difficulties increased. The question of a dowry now arose, but what dowry could a family reduced to such poverty provide? Her aunt at Camaiore had bought all that was necessary for her entrance into the convent, but Gemma never needed the clothes, which were given to her sister Angiolina, much against Gemma's will, as she wanted them to be given to the poor. But this outfit was not a dowry. In the end it appeared this talk of a dowry was only an excuse for not telling her the whole truth, which was that she could not be received unless four doctors certified her to be in perfect health. The poor girl endeavoured to procure these certificates but without success. She obtained one, at a time when it was too late to be of use: it bore the date of 27 December 1899. It was with the idea, it seems, of entering another order, the Mantellates, that she secured this certificate, but it did not help her. In the end Gemma began to realize the meaning of all these difficulties, these demands, these evasions. She begged light from God and understood that her vocation did not lie in that direction.

But what was the reason of it all? Writing some years later to her director, Father Germanus, she said:

'Already for several years I had been conscious of a desire to be a religious, but I spoke to no one about it, except my confessor and the family. All were satisfied. So on 11 May I went to make a retreat and after eighteen days the matter was settled. It was arranged that I was to enter for good in

June. I was very happy. Yet when I was told that I could come, I experienced a strange inner conviction that all my efforts to enter would be of no avail. I also often heard a voice whispering: "You shall not enter there." I did not mention these things to my confessor because I wanted to enter a convent so that I could devote myself entirely to God. And I knew that all Rules were good. But when the time came for entering, the confessor of the convent opposed my entrance and nothing could move him from his decision.'

The confessor that opposed Gemma's entrance acted at the instigation and on the suggestion of the doctor, who said that her mother had died of tuberculosis. The Lord was leading Gemma along another path. His ways are not our ways!

THE STIGMATA - IN THE HOME AGAIN

When Gemma realized that the doors of the Visitation Convent at Lucca were definitely closed against her, she felt like one who had been shipwrecked and who was on the point of reaching the shore, only to be dashed back again into the open sea. Once more she was amongst the things she imagined she had said good-bye to for ever. How would she be able to adapt herself again to home life? However, the will of God which she always sought to know and to follow sustained her in this circumstance. God would certainly make known what He desired of her, but in the meantime she would return to her family and apply herself earnestly to the faithful fulfillment of her duties.

At home Gemma continued to follow the mode of life which was interrupted by those twenty days with the same zeal in the practice of the domestic virtues and in the exercise of piety. Her fervor was remarkable. One witness states that people who saw her so often in the church could not help

admiring her demeanor and her devotion, and said one to another: What a saint she will yet be.

On festival days after Mass and Holy Communion Gemma was accustomed to go with her sister Angiolina (who now held in her affections the place once occupied by Gino) to the cemetery in order to pray at the grave of her parents and to take part in the services for the dead that were held there. Sometimes it happened that the gates were locked, and then she and her sister prayed until they were opened. A charitable woman who had seen them several times thus waiting outside the gates, invited them into her cottage. But she was often away from home and Gemma and Angelina had to wait patiently in the open air. In the evening, having satisfied their piety, they returned to the city, and then having attended Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in some church or other, they returned home. Frequently they thus spent the day without breaking their fast.

INTENSE DESIRE TO SUFFER

But in Gemma's heart there was an unaccustomed and indefinable yearning. A burning fire seemed to consume her. What did Jesus want her to do? When He had allowed her to see Him crucified with blood pouring from His most precious Wounds, it caused her to run to the well in the house, and taking the rope, to knot it in several places and tie it round her waist. She felt an intense desire to suffer and to love Jesus - a desire she was never able to satisfy completely. The instruments of penance with which this innocent and penitent girl - as the Decree which declared her Venerable calls her chastised her virginal body at a time when it was still weak from the effects of her long sickness, would make the delicately nurtured bodies of many Christians shudder.

She tormented herself with a hair shirt, and was most mortified in all things. Elisa Galgani attests that she saw in a box belonging to Gemma a knotted cord, and that often finding rust-colored stains on the sides of her dresses, came to the conclusion that they were caused by an instrument of penance. 'She used to hide her sufferings from me,' continued her aunt, 'because she did not want to displease me.' On one occasion, however, her aunt asked her what the knotted cord was for. Gemma looked at her with wide-open luminous eyes, and smilingly evading the question answered: 'Would you like a little cord also?' 'That will do now,' said her aunt. 'Tell me what you do with that little rope.' Gemma, however, again evaded the question and went away.

This burning thirst for suffering had its origin in the words spoken to her by Jesus which have already been mentioned: 'Do You desire to love Me? Learn to suffer first. Suffering teaches one how to love.' And these lessons of heavenly wisdom continued after she left the Visitation Convent. 'Take courage,' a mysterious voice said to her. 'Forget everything and abandon yourself without reserve to Him. Love Jesus much; do not place any obstacle in the way of His designs and you will see what progress you will make in a short time without your perceiving it. Be afraid of nothing, because the Heart of Jesus is a throne of Mercy where the most miserable are the best welcomed.' Gemma would then cry out: 'O my Jesus, I want to love Thee so much, but I do not know how.' And the voice would answer: 'If You desire to love Jesus, never cease for one moment to suffer for Him. The Cross is the throne of the true lovers of Jesus; the Cross is the inheritance of the elect in this life.'

Once when making the Holy Hour she seemed to see Jesus with the Cross upon His shoulders and she heard a voice that said: 'Gemma, do You desire this Cross? Behold, this is

the gift I have prepared for thee!' She answered: 'O my Jesus, do give it to me, but give me also the strength to bear it, because my shoulders are weak. But, my Jesus, if I suffer is that a sign that I love Thee?' And Jesus answered that the clearest sign He could give a soul dear to Him was to make that soul suffer, and to make it walk on the road to Calvary.

I AWAIT THEE ON CALVARY

The vigil of the Feast of the Sacred Heart, 8 June 1899, was drawing near. A little while before, Gemma had heard Jesus say to her heart after Holy Communion: 'Gemma, courage! I am waiting for thee on Calvary towards which You art journeying.'

Hitherto, Gemma's path in life had been a thorny one, but worse still was to come. Her ardent desire to become like Jesus Crucified, which until now had so filled her heart, was to be satisfied in a manner permitted to only a few of the greatest saints in the Church of God. She was to become the living image of Jesus Crucified, and to receive in her flesh the mark of His Wounds. The sublime, generous prayer she was to utter later on in ecstasy, revealing the ardent aspiration of her life, was granted. 'When my lips shall draw near to Thine to kiss Thee, make me taste the bitterness of Thy chalice. When my shoulders shall rest upon Thine, make me feel the scourges. When Thy flesh shall be communicated to mine, make me share in Thy Passion. When my head shall lean upon Thine, make me know the pain of the thorns. When my side shall be near Thine, make me feel the lance.'

That morning, therefore, Jesus made it understood that He desired to meet His spouse on Calvary, and for that reason made her feel in her heart that she was to receive that evening a most extraordinary grace. Gemma did not

understand clearly what this grace was to be, but nevertheless she went to confession and obtained a general absolution for her sins, and so put herself in a right disposition to receive the gift of God. The evening came. Before she began the Holy Hour, an intense sorrow for her sins took possession of her. Of what occurred then it is best to give her own touching account:

THE MARKS OF JESUS

'It was in the evening. Suddenly I began to feel a great interior sorrow for my sins, so great indeed that I had never experienced anything like it before. That sorrow, I might say, almost brought me to death's door. Then I felt all the powers of my soul in recollection. One thought alone possessed my understanding, the thought of all the transgressions by which I had offended God; my memory brought them all before me, and at the same time I recalled all the torments which Jesus endured for my salvation; my will detested all my sins, and I promised that I would bear all possible sufferings to atone for them. Then one thought rapidly succeeded another in my mind, thoughts of sorrow, love, fear, hope and consolation. This recollection was quickly followed by a great rapture. I found myself in the presence of my heavenly Mother, with my guardian Angel on her right. He bade me recite an act of contrition, and when I had finished my loving Mother addressed me in these words: "Daughter, in the name of Jesus, let all thy sins be forgiven." Then she added: "Jesus my Son loves thee much, and wishes to confer a favour on thee. Canst You render thyself worthy of it?" My nothingness knew not what to answer. Whereupon she continued: "I will be a Mother to thee; will You show thyself a true daughter of mine?" She then opened her mantle and covered me with it. The same instant Jesus appeared with all His Wounds open, but instead of Blood, flames as it were of fire issued from them. In an instant those

flames touched my hands, feet and heart. I felt as if I were dying, and had not my heavenly Mother supported me, under her mantle, I should have fallen to the floor. I remained in that position for several hours. When I came to, I found myself kneeling upon the floor. I still felt intense pain in my hands, feet and heart. As I arose to lie down on my bed I became aware that blood was flowing from those parts where I felt pain. I covered them as well as I could, and, assisted by my Guardian Angel, I succeeded in reaching my bed.'

Gemma had so often prayed that she might be made like unto Jesus. She wished to be nailed to the Cross with Him, a prayer which later on she was heard to utter when in ecstasy: 'O Cross! is there no place for me at the side of Jesus.' Her ardent desire is now satisfied. In her virginal flesh she bears the wounds of her Divine Spouse. Now she can say with Saint Paul the Apostle: 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.' From now on, she is to become more and more like unto her Crucified God.

GREAT SUFFERINGS ARE FORETOLD

During this same month of June, after Gemma had made the Holy Hour, Jesus revealed to her all the humiliations and sorrows she would have to undergo in the course of the few years that yet remained to her on earth. The following is Gemma's account of what was then disclosed:

'After the Holy Hour Jesus made me understand all that I would have to suffer during the rest of my life. He said that He, would soon test me to see if I truly loved Him and whether the offering I had made to Him was sincere. He told me that He would know this when my heart would appear to have become like a rock; when I should experience nothing but aridity of spirit and be afflicted and tempted; when all

my senses would rebel and would become like so many hungry wild beasts. He told me that my fidelity would be shown when I felt myself inclined to evil, when the pleasures of the world appear to be worth while and memory would recall to mind what I did not desire; when what is contrary to God's law would perforce present itself to me and it would seem that I had lost all relish for the things of God. He said that He would not allow my heart to taste comfort.

"The demons with My permission will make continual efforts to overcome your soul. They will put evil thoughts into your mind, and give you a great distaste for prayer, and you will never be without many terrors and fears. You will suffer outrages and injuries; no one will believe in you any longer. You will receive no comfort from anyone, not even from your superiors. On the contrary everyone will mortify you, and you will be greatly confused. What will pain you most will be that Heaven will seem deaf to your pleadings. Jesus will seem to you to be so severe. You will find it difficult to pray. When you will seek Jesus you will not find Him; to you it will seem that He casts you from Him and departs from you. You will desire to be recollected and instead you will be distracted. You will call upon the Blessed Virgin and the saints, but no one will have pity on you and it will seem that you have been abandoned by all. When you receive Holy Communion or go to confession, you will feel no fervor; these things will be wearisome to you. You will go through your accustomed exercises of devotion as it were through mere routine, and you will think it merely time lost. Nevertheless you will believe, but as if you did not believe; you will hope, but as if you no longer had hope; you will love Jesus, but as if you did not love Him, because during all this time you will be without feeling. Furthermore, you will grow tired of life and yet be afraid of death; you will not be able to find refuge even in tears."

'When I was about to finish the Holy Hour, Jesus said to me that He was going to treat me as His heavenly Father had treated Him.'

What a terrifying picture! A soul less heroic than Gemma's would have been utterly dismayed. From now on, however, she had but one desire, to suffer, for did not suffering make her more like Jesus? 'Jesus is the Man of Sorrows,' she said, 'and I desire to become the daughter of sorrows.'

SEE WHAT JESUS HAS DONE TO ME

The morning after the extraordinary ecstasy in which she received the Stigmata, Gemma was in a quandary. Holy souls are profoundly humble, indeed humility is at the root of their sanctity. God bestows His gifts upon the humble because they know how to keep jealously hidden the secrets of the King.

Her wounds were still bleeding. The phenomena did not cease until three o'clock in the afternoon of the Feast of the Sacred Heart. It was repeated unfailingly every week from about eight o'clock on Thursday evening until three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day. This lasted until February, 1901, when it ceased by a command of obedience. How was she to hide that bleeding? She must go out to Holy Communion. She procured a pair of gloves, as she said, 'in order to hide my hands.' Her feet were also paining her and she could scarcely stand up. It seemed to her that at every step she was going to die. Nevertheless she was able to go to Church and receive Holy Communion. How fervent must have been her Communion the day after she received that extraordinary favour. More truly than ever Gemma could say: 'Now I no longer live but Christ liveth in me.'

After Holy Communion the blood continued to flow, and she realized that she must tell someone about it, but she did not know what to say. She thought that such graces were usually conferred upon those who had consecrated themselves to God, and began timidly to ask various people whether they had certain wounds and what was usually done under the circumstances. She found no one who understood what she meant, her inquiries being met with pitying smiles. What then was she to do? Arriving home she opened her mantle and stretching out her hands towards her aunt she said with candor and simplicity: 'Aunt, see what Jesus has done to me!' Her aunt was amazed, but did not understand the meaning of this strange phenomenon.

The following description of Gemma's stigmata. It is an abridgement of the account written by Father Germanus. His description agrees with that of all the other witnesses who gave evidence in the Processes, and it is given because, as the spiritual director and the first biographer of Gemma, he includes all the stigmata, whereas the other witnesses spoke of one or other manifestation of the phenomena.

Scarcely had the ecstasy begun when there appeared on the back of both hands and in the middle of the palms a reddish mark, and then one saw under the epidermis a rent being made little by little in the flesh inside, an oblong on the backs of the hands and irregularly round in the palms. A little later the skin itself broke and the opening took on all the characteristics of a fresh wound, about a centimeter in diameter in the palms and two millimeters in diameter and twenty millimetres in length on the back of the hands. Sometimes the laceration appeared to be only on the surface; at other times it was almost imperceptible to the naked eye. As a rule, however, it was very deep and seemed that it would pass through the hand and that the upper and lower wounds would meet. One could not make certain of

this latter appearance because the apertures were filled with blood, in part congealed but for the most part freely flowing, and when the blood stopped, they closed quickly; being in ecstasy the violence of the pain caused her hands to be convulsively closed. The wound in the palm became covered with a hard fleshy protuberance in the form of the head of a nail, raised and not adhering, about the size of a penny (soldo). In the feet, the wounds were wider and surrounded towards the edges with livid flesh, and the difference in size was the opposite to the wounds in the hands, the wound on the top of the left foot being bigger than that of the sole of the right foot. The aperture of the wound in the side was in the form of a crescent lying on its back with the two points turned upwards. Its length in a straight line was six centimetres and its width in the middle, three millimeters, forming with its two opposite sides an angle half a centimeter in length from top to bottom. The blood that came from the aforesaid wound was copious, as could be seen from her under-garments, which were soaked with it. She did her best to hide this fact and made use of several folds of linen, which she applied to her side repeatedly, but in a short time they were blood-soaked. She would then hide them in order to wash them herself later on in secret. The Friday ecstasy ceasing, the flow of blood from the side also ceased, and the raw flesh on the hands and feet began to dry up, the mass of lacerated tissues drawing in and becoming firmer little by little. On the following day or on Sunday at the latest, not a trace of those deep wounds remained, neither in the centre nor at the sides, the flesh on top becoming quite natural and quite similar to that of the parts that had not been torn. A white mark alone remained to show that on the previous day there had been raw wounds in those places, which at the end of five days would open again as before, and close again in the same manner. Two years after the phenomena of the stigmata had ceased, at the time of her death, the aforesaid marks still remained

and could easily be observed on her body, particularly on her feet, which when she was alive and in ecstasy had been very difficult to uncover.

'YOU WILL BE A DAUGHTER OF MY PASSION' - DIFFICULTY OCCASIONED BY HER HUMILITY

Monsignor Volpi, who had heard Gemma's confession on that memorable June 8, was perhaps expecting her to return to him with an account of what happened. But Gemma had never been able to bring herself to reveal to him the extraordinary favors she had received from God. From the first apparition of Jesus Crucified, that is, from before her entrance into the Visitation Convent, she had been told again and again by her Guardian Angel to tell her confessor about them, and had been reproved for not doing so. 'It is very wrong of you,' the Angel said, she mentions this in her Autobiography, 'to hide these things from your confessor. Remember - and I am speaking to you about it for the last time - if you keep silent again about this matter, I shall not let you see me again.' But how was she to make known such unusual and mysterious happenings?

The fact is that all these wonderful favors, instead of making her vain, filled her soul with extreme confusion. She esteemed herself unworthy of them and also feared that when people and even her confessor heard of them, they would be scandalized, for she deemed herself a great sinner. It was so easy for her to confess a fault that would lower her in the world's esteem, but it was a far different matter to lay claim to divine favors. This it was which prevented her from speaking.

But to the difficulties already mentioned there was another difficulty which seems a further justification of Gemma's attitude. Father Germanus refers to it, and so does another

of her biographers, Sister Gesualda, a Carmelite nun, who also came from Lucca and was only a year younger than Gemma. Sister Gesualda also went to confession to Monsignor Volpi. 'The confessional of Monsignor in the Basilica of Saint Michael,' she wrote, 'was always surrounded with people, for as a director of souls he had the reputation of being a second Saint Francis de Sales. And as Auxiliary Bishop to the Archbishop of Lucca he was kept very much occupied. Gemma felt that she would take up too much of his time. It is true that she could have written to him; yet she knew that after all to receive an answer she would have to take her place among those waiting around his confessional. External difficulties were not lacking, but the greatest difficulty was within herself." As previously mentioned this interior difficulty was her humility.

MEETS THE PASSIONISTS FOR THE FIRST TIME

God in His mercy desired to put an end to her difficulty and therefore came to her aid in a manner that at first sight would seem to be purely fortuitous, but which was undoubtedly a beautiful manifestation of His Providence.

In 1899, in preparation for the opening of a new century, Pope Leo XIII ordered that missions should be given in every city throughout Italy. The Passionist Fathers were chosen for Lucca, and the mission in the Cathedral began on June 25, and lasted until July 9. It was a great success.

Gemma did not attend the mission from its beginning. During the month in which she had received from Jesus such an abundance of heavenly favors she had but one desire, to hear Him and His love spoken of, and therefore she had attended a course of sermons on the Sacred Heart which were being preached in another church. It was only at the close of the month of June that she felt herself inspired to go

to the Cathedral of Saint Martin. But what was her astonishment when she saw that the missionaries were clad exactly as she had seen Saint Gabriel dressed! The impression thus made upon her was indescribable. From that moment, she confessed some years later, she began to have a special affection for them, and attended every sermon of the mission.

A few miles outside Lucca, in a district known as Angelo, near Vinciana, the Passionists have one of the most beautiful houses of their Congregation. The nature of their work often brought them to Lucca, but Gemma had never met any of them. In the heart of the city and in the midst of her family, she lived as in a convent.

Her first meeting with the Passionists had such an important influence upon the course of her life that it is best to set down here her own account of how it happened:

'We had come to the last day of the holy mission. All the people were gathered in the church for the General Communion. I also was taking part with the others, and Jesus, Who was pleased, it seems, made Himself clearly felt in my soul, and asked: "Gemma, do you like that habit with which the priest is clothed?" And He indicated a Passionist in my vicinity. It was not necessary for me to answer Jesus in words, for my heart was speaking with its palpitations. "Would you also like to be clothed in a habit like that?" Jesus added. "Mio Dio," I exclaimed. "Yes," Jesus continued, "you will be a daughter of My Passion, and a favorite daughter. One of these children of Mine will be a father to you. Go and make everything known to him."

At that moment Gemma felt she had strength enough to speak - a strength that she had lacked for so long, and she at once went towards the confessional of one of the

missioners, Father Ignatius of Saint Theresa, who was the Superior of the mission. 'But,' she tells us, 'no matter how much I tried I could not bring myself to speak of my affairs to him.' What was the cause? Was it perhaps the great crowd that gathered around his confessional, or was it another attack of that repugnance she had felt against revealing the secret of the King?

A witness in the Processes supplies an answer to these questions, though not a very satisfactory answer. 'Gemma,' deposed Cecilia Giannini, 'told me later on in confidence that Jesus had commanded her to go to confession to Father Ignatius, and to tell him everything, even what until then she had kept hidden from her own confessor. Gemma obeyed, but felt such contraction in her throat that she was unable to speak. She then went to Father Gaetano. Whether this was by order of Jesus or by her own free will, I do not remember, and I cannot say.'

Father Ignatius, who died in 1927, was a man of great virtue and left behind him a reputation for sanctity. Gemma therefore went to another confessional and to another missionary, and with the greatest ease explained to him, in two or three separate confessions, the story of her life and the heavenly favors she had received including, last of all, the marks in her hands, feet and side, and how she found it very difficult to speak properly about these latter to her ordinary confessor.

The missionary listened without interrupting her, not knowing what to say, to the account which the humble girl gave of the marvels which God had worked in her soul. But her candor and ingenuousness convinced him that he had before him one of those privileged creatures which God at times bestows upon the earth. However, he was reluctant to offer an opinion at the moment, and after giving her certain

permissions she had sought told her that he would think about the matter and that on his next visit to Lucca would listen to her again, but that in the meantime she would have to reveal everything to her ordinary confessor.

Gemma wanted to be a nun. After the last words of Jesus it seemed to her that she now knew the secret of her vocation. Nor had she forgotten the salutation of Saint Gabriel when he called her 'Sorella mia' (sister mine). And had not Jesus asked her whether she would like to be clothed in the habit the missionaries wore? Did He not say to her: 'You will be a daughter of My Passion'? She longed to anticipate the joy of being a nun and therefore sought permission to take the vows of religion. She had already taken a vow of perpetual virginity, but the missionary allowed her to add for private devotion the vows of poverty and obedience until September 8, when with the consent of her ordinary confessor she might renew them for short periods. As she herself attests, the day she took these vows was one of the happiest of her life.

Gemma had also asked permission to practice certain corporal mortifications, but the missionary refused his consent, thinking rightly that God would supply her with abundant opportunities for suffering. On the contrary, he deprived her of the instruments of penance with which she had been torturing her innocent body.

The missionary's name was Father Gaetano of the Child Jesus. He was an excellent missionary and endowed with fine qualities. Gemma's meeting him was a blessing for her. And afterwards, even from Heaven, she remembered his kindness, and paid him back with a generosity of which only the saints are capable.

Before proceeding with Father Gaetano's report upon the extraordinary things which had been thus made known to him, other happenings must be related which had an important influence upon Gemma's life. The ways of Providence in her regard are henceforward so manifestly wonderful that we write of them with diffidence and veneration.

'THE WAYS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE' - A PROVIDENTIAL MEETING

While Gemma was following with such a transport of faith and devotion the practices of the month of the Sacred Heart in the Church of the Visitation Nuns, a pious woman whom the reader knows by name was also there for the same purpose. This woman who was afterwards to occupy such an important place in Gemma's life - to become in fact a second mother to her - had not met her at this time. But she had often seen her before this and being greatly edified by her devotion had inquired into her identity and had been told that she was the daughter of the late Signor Galgani, the chemist.

When the month of the Sacred Heart was over, Cecilia Giannini like Gemma went to the mission at the Cathedral. Without knowing it these two were following one another. In the Cathedral Gemma, accompanied by her aunt, was seen a few times by her future adopted mother, but the matter ended there.

A few days after the mission Cecilia Giannini received a letter from Father Gaetano, who was staying in the Retreat near Lucca, informing her that he would call upon her on a certain day and asking her to find Gemma and tell her that on that day she was to come to see him. Gemma, accompanied by one of her aunts, therefore came to see

Father Gaetano at the Giannini home. After speaking to him for a little while, she left the house and went to the Church of Santa Maria Bianca. Father Gaetano followed her there and heard her confession. Before Gemma left Cecilia Giannini had asked her to return the next day. She did so in the afternoon. Cecilia liked to have Gemma near her, it did her good, she said. She would have liked to have her as a frequent visitor, especially when she learned that the family was living in such poverty. She could not but feel a certain veneration for Gemma. However, there were already many in the house, for more than twenty sat down to dinner every day. But her brother, Matthew Giannini, the head of the house, saved her from her difficulty by saying: 'Let her come and let her stay for dinner also.' Thus began the relations between Gemma and the Giannini family.

Before she had met Gemma and when she had got to know who she was and the wretched conditions under which she lived, Cecilia Giannini had mentioned these facts to her brother. He showed himself very willing to receive her into the family, for he was a man good-hearted and full of charity. 'I knew nothing about the extraordinary graces,' he deposed in the Processes. 'I only knew that she was a good girl and knowing the condition of the family I wanted to perform an act of charity. The permission of Gemma's aunts was asked, and they were very pleased.'

VISITS TO THE GIANNINI HOME

Gemma therefore began to spend a few hours every day at the Giannini home. Subsequently she used to stay the whole day. God Who, in the designs of His Providence, had arranged that these two holy souls, Gemma and Cecilia Giannini, should meet on the pathway of life in order to assist one another to sanctify their souls and become better instruments of His Glory, also awakened in their hearts from

their first meeting an undying affection for one another. Cecilia Giannini as before mentioned experienced in Gemma's presence a sense of spiritual well-being. 'I prayed more,' she said. 'I was more recollected, and in trouble and difficulties I was more at peace. She was generally silent, but when I asked her a question or mentioned any of my trials, a word from her was enough to tranquillize me.' This was the reason why she wanted Gemma near her. On her side Gemma wished to be with her friend and says so expressly in her Autobiography: 'From then I loved her as if she were my mother, and I have always regarded her as such.'

It was not only Aunt Cecilia - she will be so called henceforth, for it was by that name she was known in the Giannini household - who experienced a sense of spiritual well-being in Gemma's society. The other members of the family felt her attraction. Signora Justina, the mother of this excellent family, desired Gemma to become the friend of her grownup daughters, knowing that they would be safe in her company and would also be edified by her virtue. She records with pleasure in the Processes the first time she saw Gemma speaking to her eldest daughter Annetta.

These meetings were few, however, because in the beginning of July the family went to the country and did not return until November. Aunt Cecilia remained at Lucca. Being alone she desired more than ever to have Gemma with her, and with the consent of Gemma's aunts, she called for her every morning, and brought her back home every evening. Sometimes Gemma stayed with her at night.

If Aunt Cecilia was pleased to have Gemma's company, Gemma was no less pleased to have hers, for she was conscious of being in a congenial atmosphere where she was understood.

MISUNDERSTOOD BY HER OWN

The Galgani family was gradually growing smaller.

One brother had set out or was about to set out for America; another for military service. There were left then, only Gemma, her two aunts, her brother Anthony and her two sisters. Death was soon to make other gaps. However, in her own family Gemma was not understood and never could have been. She had endeavored to keep secret the extraordinary things that were happening to her, not only because of her humility and her innate repugnance at revealing them, but also because she had been warned not to do so, by her confessor, her Guardian Angel, and even by Jesus Himself. But no matter how much she tried to hide her affairs, they became known and were discussed outside the family. Gemma suffered in consequence. She remembered the warnings of Jesus Who had said to her often that if she allowed these things to be known in her family she would have to suffer. Besides there was one at home who, being unable to understand these sublime things, used nevertheless to speak of them publicly. Gemma was spied upon continually, laughed at and ridiculed, even outside the house.



What Gemma felt and to what a pass things had come is easily understood from a letter she wrote to her confessor:

'I am terrified. N. N. knows everything about me. This morning she was speaking about my affairs as if it did not matter. She and my brother were making fun of them. I am

not a bit afraid of their ridicule, you know. From eleven o'clock this morning until three I have not been left alone. She says she wants to see everything. She is like a little imp. Besides, my aunts look on and smile, so that I could almost cry. She has even brought her school companions to the house, saying to them, in order to make fun of me: "Let us go and see Gemma in ecstasy." Yesterday she shouted out these words outside the front door for everyone to hear."

Sometimes, however, the phenomena appeared in such a way that she was unable to hide them. Her friend, Palmira Valentini, attested that on one occasion she met her with clotted blood all over her forehead and temples. She was not surprised at what she saw, but as Gemma did not realize that anything extraordinary had happened, she said to her: 'Gemma, one of yours has taken place.' Then she invited her into her house to wash herself. Gemma entered and washed, but not before her friend had wiped some of the blood away with her handkerchief, which she afterwards treasured with veneration. Palmira Valentini was well aware of the extraordinary things that were happening to Gemma, for she herself had told her about them. She gave the following evidence in the Processes:

'One day Gemma asked me: "Do you know what a beautiful present Jesus has given to me?" And I answered: "Tell me, Gemma, what Jesus has given to you." Gemma replied: "Guess what it is. Even Sister Julia guessed." I believe from the way Gemma spoke that she thought it was an ordinary gift received by all who loved Jesus. In fact, I know this was what she thought. And I insisted that she should tell me what it was that Jesus gave her. Gemma then replied: "Jesus has given me the marks of His Wounds." I prudently said no more than: "Did it have to take so long to tell me that!"'

But others were not as prudent and as charitable as Palmira Valentini and because of their imprudence Gemma had to suffer much. During a quarrel in the home a member of the family blasphemed. Gemma was horrified and began to sweat blood all over her body. But how was she to hide this blood? One of her aunts, 'who is so good and the one who loved me so much', as Gemma described her in a letter to her confessor, followed her into her room that evening to find out the cause of the blood. But it is better to quote the letter in which she mentions these facts:

'Monsignor, do you know what one of my aunts did to me yesterday? When I arrived home I went to my room. She followed me, very angry, and said: "This evening Julia is not here to defend you, and you must let me see where all that blood comes from or, if not, I shall beat you until you do." As I remained silent, she grew angrier, and holding me by the throat with one hand, with the other she tried to take off my clothes, but did not succeed, for the bell rang and she left me. But the matter did not end there. When I was going to bed she came to me and said it was time I gave up all my tomfoolery, and that I had given people enough to talk about. "Mind," she said to me, "if you do not tell me where that blood comes from, I shall not allow you out of the house alone nor shall I send you anywhere." As you can imagine, at these words I began to cry, and I did not know what to do. At last I decided to tell her and I answered in this way: "The blasphemies of your nephew are the cause of it." "What!" my aunt said. "The blasphemies cause this blood to flow?" "Yes," I answered. "When I hear blasphemies I see Jesus suffering and I suffer with Him, and I suffer in my heart and the blood comes." That appeared to calm her a little, and she said: "Is it only when your brother blasphemes that you suffer and not when others do so?" "I suffer always when I hear blasphemies, but there is a difference. His blasphemies

make me suffer much more." And in saying this I cried bitterly."

Yes, again and again this innocent victim sweated blood, and even wept tears of blood when she heard her Jesus blasphemed. It can be easily understood that Gemma had much to endure in her own home. However, being so meek and resigned, she was not the one to lessen the weight of the burden of crosses and humiliations that were placed upon her shoulders. She remembered what Jesus had said about not allowing His divine favors to be known, and fearing therefore that He would be offended she asked her confessor to arrange for her to enter a convent. But her confessor was at a loss what to do. Knowing that she was visiting the Giannini's, he used his influence with Cecilia Giannini and asked her to keep Gemma with her as long as possible. This is known on the authority of Euphemia Giannini who, afterwards as a Passionist nun, bore the name of Mother Gemma of Jesus. 'My family,' she said, 'was fortunate in having Monsignor Volpi as a friend. He used to visit us, and my aunt sometimes went to confession to him. Knowing the situation in which Gemma was placed at that time in her own home - 'he desired my aunt to keep her at our home as long as possible.'

So to the exhortations of the Passionists who had been the first to speak of Gemma, as the Processes attest, and in particular, of Father Gaetano who, according to Annetta Giannini's deposition, 'desired that the Giannini's should see her and afterwards receive her into their home as a member of the family because they would be blessed through her "there was now added the authoritative and welcome advice of the Auxiliary Bishop, Monsignor Volpi, who strengthened Cecilia Giannini in the resolve she had not only made but had already put into practice. God, therefore, Who had formerly come to the help of His servant when she was

tormented with interior anxieties, by making the Passionists known to her, continued to show His care of her, and fulfilled the promise made to her when He cured her of the sickness that would otherwise have proved fatal: 'And if it should happen that you cannot become a nun, or that the nuns should send you away, I will find persons who will take care of you, and who will give you all that will be necessary.'

Cecilia Giannini therefore took every opportunity of having Gemma near her. On her side, Gemma was eager to take advantage of the invitation and her aunts' permission to remain all night occasionally at the home of her benefactor, especially on Thursday and Friday, in order to hide as far as possible what happened to her on those days.

In the beginning, however, Cecilia Giannini was somewhat perplexed about these extraordinary manifestations. But being an intelligent and prudent woman, she concealed her perplexity, and watched Gemma continually. When she saw what did happen to the holy girl, she was not upset, and it was not long before she was convinced that Gemma was a privileged creature, and she thanked God from her heart that she had an Angel such as Gemma for a companion.

MORE THAN A MERE GUEST, A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY

But the family after spending the summer months at Viareggio, San Casciano di Controne and other places, now returned to Lucca, and Cecilia Giannini was wondering what she ought to do. Was she to be deprived of the companion from whom she had received such spiritual good? Must she send Gemma back to suffer in her home? She took courage and said to her brother: 'God has placed this angel in my care. Could she not remain with us? We have eleven children in the house; one more will not matter.'

This last remark was not really made in order to introduce a total stranger into the family permanently. They also knew that Gemma's mother had died of consumption. Was it prudent to bring her into contact with healthy children? But no one knows what hearts filled with the charity of Christ may venture. God willed it so, anyway, and no one can go against the will of God. Matthew Giannini was most agreeable, and so was his wife and all the children, and the priest named Laurence Agrimonti who, holding a benefice at the Cathedral, lived with the family. Even the domestic staff was pleased, a thing rare enough, and all the more remarkable in this case because Gemma was coming not as a servant but as a member of the family.

Aunt Cecilia, having been so readily granted what she desired, went at once to Gemma's home. Her aunts, who in spite of what had occurred really loved Gemma, hesitated a little before giving their consent. Their realization of the poverty of the family, and the fact that such unusual things were happening to Gemma, things they could not understand, caused them to yield at least in part. They consented to allow Gemma to spend half her time at the Gianninis' and declared that she had to spend the other half at home. Finally in September, 1900, they gave their full consent, and Gemma then took up her residence permanently with the Gianninis, and never left them, except for a few days before her death, and then on the doctor's advice. Gemma's brother deposed in the Processes that she never visited her home again except on a few occasions to visit her Aunt Elisa. But the latter came to see Gemma more frequently at the Giannini home.

WITH THE 'MANTELLATES'

The first months Gemma passed outside her own home were spent between Aunt Cecilia and the 'Mantellate' nuns who

are known in Lucca as 'Suorine.' A deposition of one of these nuns, Sister M. Julia of Saint Joseph, declares that Gemma was with them from August, 1899, to March or April, 1900. This is what she says:

'I know that Monsignor Volpi, through Signora Cecilia Giannini, was looking for some means of getting Gemma away from her home, in order that when in ecstasy she might not be observed by strangers. I know for a fact that Gemma was once found rapt out of her senses and that she had to be carried to her room. Signora Cecilia Giannini would have liked to have taken her immediately to her own home, but decided against it because there were so many little children in the family, and she therefore asked us to keep her in the Convent, on the understanding that she would afterwards repay us for what we spent on her. We readily consented. And Gemma then began to frequent our parlours, the little church and the rooms next the sacristy. Gemma came to us in the month of August, 1899, it seems, and remained until March or April, 1900.'

The words 'it seems' are italicized because there is a doubt whether these dates are correct. Here is the deposition on the same subject made by the Superior at that time, Sister M. Agnes Galli:

'I believe Gemma began to frequent our Convent here when she had been miraculously cured. As I have said, she came here every day, presented and recommended to us by Signora Cecilia Giannini. The reason why Gemma was sent here by Signora Giannini was this: to be able to be alone with Jesus and to pray at her ease and as long as she liked. We welcomed her because we knew from Signora Giannini that she was good - a holy soul she called her. She came here after she had finished at home, or in the church, at about half-past eight. We gave her coffee with milk and a

little bread because she said she did not want much, and she took the coffee in the parlor near the front door. Afterwards she went through the sacristy to the priest's room. For the midday meal she took very little, some soup, a piece of something else, and on a rare occasion a little wine, which she never asked for, but took only when I pressed her to do so. She passed the whole time between breakfast and dinner in our little church, except for a short time spent in holy conversation or in knitting stockings for Signora Cecilia Giannini. After dinner she returned to the church and remained there until Signora Giannini or her aunts came to bring her home. I think that Gemma was living in the Via Biscione at that time.'

These depositions are quoted at length, especially the last one, in order to prove that when Gemma frequented the Convent of the 'Mantellate' nuns, she was already in contact with the Giannini family, and that the nuns came to know her through Signora Cecilia, who was a fervent tertiary of the Servants of Mary, and that if, as is true, Gemma sometimes spent the night at the Convent, it was not because she had been abandoned by her relatives.'

Gemma stayed with the 'Mantellate' nuns for a few days on another occasion. Her first visit was accompanied by many extraordinary facts which will be mentioned later on in this book. We shall also have to relate the steps she took in an endeavor to become a religious in this same Convent.

HER NEW FAMILY - THE GIANNINIS

In order to give the reader an account of Gemma's new family there is set down here in its entirety the description given of it by the Carmelite nun Sister Gesualda:

'The Giannini family was really and profoundly Christian and reminded one of the ancient patriarchal families. At its head was Matthew Giannini, tall, dignified, with a long white beard - a fine type of man from whose countenance goodness and kindness beamed. His was a sincere, upright, pious soul. His wife, a diligent and intelligent mother, was not less pious. At that time her eleven children formed a stairway, from the eldest, who was at the University and about to take his degree, to the youngest who was not yet out of long clothes. An aunt completed this family, Aunt Cecilia, whose watchful care made her loved by all. Because Signora Justina was often sick, it fell to Aunt Cecilia's lot to look after the affairs of the household, and it was a task that was not always easy. Nevertheless she was able to find time for works of charity and zeal. To understand how she was able to get through so much work, it was enough to see her. Slim, energetic, good, there was a resoluteness and masculine intelligence in her look. Her piety was not merely emotional, but enlightened, genuine, deep. Her sincerity - a marked characteristic of hers - could be read in her countenance. Christ was King of this household, and the Gianninis made no mystery about it. The family drew its income, a large part of which was given to the poor and religious orders, from a pharmacy, a chandler's shop and several properties in the country. A certain part of the house was set aside for the use of the Passionist Fathers, who when they came to Lucca knew that they had at their disposal at the Gianninis' special rooms, a little chapel, and a refectory with a crucifix looking down upon the table as in their own monastery."

The Giannini family, therefore, must always be associated with the name of Blessed Gemma Galgani, and be blessed and venerated by all who love and honor her. This family is a shining example of how pleasing and acceptable to God is charity, and of how He rewards it even in this life. The name

of this family will be remembered through the centuries, and their house will be regarded as a holy sanctuary where a saint has left the perfume of every virtue.

HER EDIFYING CONDUCT

Before proceeding with the story of Gemma's life it is thought well to mention here some of these virtues, gleaned from the evidence of witnesses. It is to be regretted that the most authoritative witness of all in the Giannini household did not live long enough to take part in the ceremonies of the Beatification. Aunt Cecilia died at eighty-four years of age, on 24 December 1931, less than a month after the Sovereign Pontiff had declared that Gemma had practiced virtue in an heroic degree, and had bestowed upon her the title of Venerable.

Upon entering her new home Gemma had but one thought, to love as ardently as possible that God who had come to her rescue in her spiritual and temporal necessities, and also to show her gratitude to the hospitable and good family by edifying and assisting them as far as she could. Matthew Giannini thus spoke of Gemma's conduct in his home:

'When she was with my sister Cecilia, especially on Sundays when we went out for a walk, I believe she occupied her time either in reading or in conversation. In the evening they went to Benediction. As far as I know Gemma never went out alone, for she went to the church both morning and evening with my sister, and we never sent her on errands or anything of that sort. We treated her as one of the family. Even when she visited her family or the Zitine Sisters she was with my sister, or another member of the family went with her. She was a source of edification to my sons and daughters, who held her in great esteem, as did also my wife and even the servants. People thought it extraordinary that we should

keep her in our home. They called her stupid because she never spoke to them. She dressed in a humble fashion, kept her eyes lowered and was always recollected, and never took part in the children's games. She used to go with my sister to the Rosa church and also to that of S. Martino, which was nearer. She often went to Santa Maria Bianca, which was our parish church, and to a few other churches on special feast days. They went out early, in winter from half-past six to seven o'clock, and in summer from six o'clock to half-past six. I have said they heard two Masses, that is, when there were two. Otherwise they spent that time in private prayers; Gemma was never idle. We had a piano and the children played and sang, but not Gemma. Towards the end of her life I learned with surprise that she understood music and could sing, and embroider. I do not know exactly whether she could play the piano.'

Aunt Cecilia confirms and completes this deposition of her brother:

'Before Gemma came to reside permanently at our house, for some months I used to call for her at her home, and frequently I found that she had gone to church, for she assisted at Mass and went to Holy Communion daily, then and afterwards, except on one or two mornings when through indisposition she could not go. At first she used to work at crocheting, but she preferred knitting or mending stockings, because, I believe, it enabled her to keep more recollected. And she worked constantly, for she looked after the stockings of the entire household. She did whatever there was to do. If the need arose she put the rooms in order or helped the children with their lessons. Although she could not cook, she sometimes lit the kitchen fire. She was always humble, obedient, calm and silent.'

The eldest boy of the family, Joseph, who became a lawyer, deposed that although no particular work was assigned to her in the house, she helped everyone gracefully and without ostentation. 'She taught the little children,' he continued, 'without, however, undertaking the more delicate tasks reserved to others. Her demeanor was always such that she was an edification to us all.'

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Gemma should have won the love and esteem not only of the family, but also of strangers who visited the house. In regard to this matter Signora Justina deposed:

'As regards the esteem in which she was held in the house I can say that I never saw her commit the slightest fault. All the others in the house had the same opinion of her. For instance, when I told my eldest boy that I was afraid that I had cancer in the stomach, he said to me: "Did not Gemma tell you that you hadn't, and why don't you believe her?" Even visitors came to hold her in high regard.'

The evidence of many witnesses is summed up in the words of Brother Famiano of the Heart of Jesus, a Passionist whose work often brought him to the house: 'She was like an angel, she spoke only when she was addressed. When she had finished eating she retired immediately from the table. The whole household regarded her as a soul that belonged entirely to Jesus.'

The one who, above all others, rejoiced in having Gemma in the house, was, it is needless to say, Cecilia Giannini, who at a certain time every day used to retire, saying: 'Now let me enjoy my Gemma.' And then she and Gemma would go into the courtyard at the back of the house or into a little room where they would work and talk about Jesus. These were precious hours in which Cecilia Giannini endeavored by

innocent artifice to make Gemma reveal her intimate secrets, secrets that otherwise would have remained hidden. 'With Gemma,' said Cecilia, 'I was at rest. Merely to see her near me made me feel more recollected, more patient, more able to bear the weight of fatigue, and the bitterness of my troubles. What an account I should have had to render to God if I had not appreciated the gift He had bestowed in giving me this angelic creature, and if I had not reaped some profit for my soul through it!'

In spite, however, of the esteem in which Gemma was held and the confidence reposed in her, she never forgot that she did not belong to the family, and regulated her conduct with admirable delicacy and prudence. Never by any word or act did she cause the least disturbance in the family. She never meddled in affairs that did not concern her, or discussed the domestic arrangements. When visitors came to the house she slipped away unobtrusively, and it was this reserve and silence which made them think she was stupid. Canon Andreuccetti, seeing her on one occasion retire on his arrival, asked the reason why, and was told that it was her usual practice on such occasions. She acted in the same way even with Doctor Tommasi, whom she knew well.

The hearts of Saints are extremely delicate, and Gemma felt deeply the duty of gratitude she owed to her adopted family. She prayed constantly for them all. 'Mom,' she was once heard to say in an ecstasy as she was addressing the Blessed Virgin, 'my confessor has obliged me to do something. He has asked me to pray for this family. I have done so already. Will you do what I cannot do! Obtain for them great graces, an infinite number of graces. Mom, you understand, an infinite number. If at times Jesus desires to send them trials, tell Jesus to show His mercy towards them.' And on another occasion she prayed: 'Mother mine, I recommend this house and this family to you. Tell Jesus to

help them in the hour of tribulation, but if He should be about to lay His hand, heavily upon them, I am here, and let Him lay it on me instead. I recommend this matter to you very fervently. Tell Jesus that it is very important."

Gemma realized how great was the care that was bestowed upon her, and she wished to make some return, but not being able to do so, she showed her gratitude in a thousand ways. 'I shall pray to Jesus for you,' she often said to anyone who helped her in any way. But she did not want to be treated well. 'I don't want them to do anything for me,' she wrote to her director. 'If you could only see what they do! How they put a foot-warmer in my bed at night, and all this for one who deserves to be treated like the fowls. Is this right? I am heaped round with comforts. And in spite of all I am not able to say a word of thanks. If I could only help them with my poor prayers!

In the same way she complained to Aunt Cecilia: 'You must not bother about me at all. I am to be considered no more than the duster in the kitchen; otherwise Jesus will not be pleased. I do not desire any care and attention from you.' She knew she was poor and wanted to be treated as a poor person. 'You may think, perhaps,' she wrote to her director, 'that I regret that I have to live on the charity of others. No, No! I do not regret that, for is it not that which makes me like to Jesus?'

It was this understanding of her actual position economically which urged her no doubt to treat the domestic staff with such consideration, even though she received in return from some of the servants only rebuffs and criticism. Knowing that this was done because they were jealous of the care Aunt Cecilia bestowed on her, Gemma used to say on these occasions: 'Have patience, the Lord will repay you for what you do for me. What I want you to do is to act as if I was not

in the house.' On her side Gemma tried to be very attentive to them in order to take away any cause for jealousy, so that one of them was heard to say: 'That poor girl would like to help us, only she hasn't got the strength.'

A PROOF OF HER GRATITUDE

A duty which she wished to be reserved for herself alone, was the care of the sick in the home. For this provided her with an excellent means of showing her gratitude. 'When she was with me,' attests Aunt Cecilia, 'she looked after those who were sick and showed them the greatest care and attention, being always punctual with the medicine, visiting them regularly, taking note of their temperature. We should have forgotten many things, but she was always so attentive and so exact. She had no favorites. She acted just the same whether it was my sister-in-law who was often sick, or Don Laurence, or a servant, or one of the children. She was always prepared, but spoke very little, and all this she did for the love of God.'

On one occasion Signora Justina was seriously ill with what was thought to be a cancer in the stomach. Notwithstanding all the remedies that were tried, she grew worse from day to day, and it was feared that she was dying. Gemma gave her every care. Justina herself deposed as follows in the Processes:

'During my long sickness, Gemma of her own accord undertook to write down every day an account of the progress of the disease and filled several pages of a day-book. I asked Doctor Nerici to read Gemma's manuscript in order that he might know the history of my sickness, and when he had done so he said: "One would think it had been written by a doctor."'

In order to obtain Justina's cure a friend of the family had arranged for a triduum in honor of the Sacred Heart in the Church of San Giovanni. All the household took part in it. But Gemma, she whose heart was burning to be near Jesus, remained with the sick woman, and recited with her the prayers that were being said in the church. According to the testimony of Signora Justina, Gemma sometimes spent entire days in the sick-room without saying a word. And what was she meditating in that long silence? She was praying and making a heroic resolve - she was thinking of offering to Jesus her own life which seemed to her of no account, in exchange for the life of her benefactress who was also the mother of twelve 'children. She began to think it was her positive duty. She therefore approached her confessor and her director to obtain their consent. She wrote to the latter:

'Father, the mother is very seriously ill. I have been thinking this way: when I was sick she was ready to help me even more than she was able, but I have had no opportunity of showing them gratitude. Perhaps the time has come? The mother is sick and I cannot make any return for all she has done for me. Up to the present I have offered for her only a little suffering, some little mortifications. This morning I spoke to Jesus, and afterwards I said to my confessor: "I should like to give my life for the poor mother!" He said:

"No. Absolutely no." I then said: "Two years, at least? May I not give at least that much!" Jesus was satisfied, and said: "Yes, you may. However, on condition that the Father director is also satisfied!" I want to make this promise, this vow, tomorrow morning, but I cannot unless I get the permission of the Father director. Father, you will not refuse, will you? Two for Serafina, and two for the mother, more if there is need. I am most anxious that you should reply immediately.'

Serafina was a friend of Gemma who had mentioned her to her spiritual director before. 'I have only about eight years to live,' she wrote to him. 'I should like to give three to Serafina and keep the others for myself.' After several refusals and many evasions, Gemma at length obtained the desired consent. Signora Justina was cured except for an inconvenience of another nature which Gemma herself had foretold. Gemma, however, became seriously ill with stomach trouble, and was in violent pain. To make Aunt Cecilia realize how much she was suffering, she said that the effect of swallowing a drop of water was like a burning fire in her stomach. Father Germanus attests that the two women mentioned above got better, but that Gemma died at the exact end of the period she had bargained to live.'

If the laying down of one's life out of love for a person who returns it, is according to the Gospel an act of the greatest charity, what must be said of that charity by which one is impelled to offer one's life and one's services on behalf of a person by whom one is actually despised? There was a servant in the house who had a disgusting wound in the leg, which was dressed by Gemma with every care even though she received only abuse in return. Mother Gemma Giannini said that when passing the room where the servant was, she saw Gemma on her knees kiss and dress the sore.

After her death Gemma continued to prove her gratitude to her benefactors. Chevalier Matthew Giannini well recognized this and in his evidence before the ecclesiastical tribunal he said:

'For my part I must say this, that although my five sons were all at the war, exposed to the greatest danger, they all came back safe and sound, and one who had been appointed to a very dangerous post, was not sent. All this I owe, I believe, to the intercession of Gemma, to whom we have always

prayed. And I think that it is to her I also owe the success of all my sons. They are a great consolation to me, for they go to Holy Communion every day, and are much occupied in promoting Catholic Action. Of my daughters, five are nuns, one has remained at home and one is married.'

Notwithstanding all this, Gemma feared that she was a source of scandal to her benefactors. Thus she wrote to a nun: 'Say a prayer for me, Mother, that Jesus may give me the grace to set a good example to this family and not to be a scandal to it.'

HELPING THE NEEDY

The reader will remember how charitable Gemma was as a child, how she was even still more charitable when her family fell from prosperity to absolute want. In the Giannini household, the desire she had of assisting the poor, did not meet with so many obstacles, and she was able to satisfy it to her heart's content. The Gianninis, knowing her kind-heartedness, made her the channel of their charities to the poor, and Aunt Cecilia's recollections give us an insight into this aspect of Gemma's virtue. The poor have a way of finding out where they will be well treated, and there was always a goodly number who knocked at the Gianninis' door. Gemma knew their knock, being able to distinguish it from others. She went, therefore, to offer whatever Aunt Cecilia had set apart for the poor. Sometimes, however, there was a disagreement between Gemma and her adopted mother. But we had better give Aunt Cecilia's own account:

'In order to be able to help her neighbor, Gemma was willing to go hungry. She would have liked to give away everything. On the contrary I did not approve of this and I scolded her because, I said, I did not want to encourage the poor to come to the house in a procession. Besides, in case of any

trouble I should not have been able to help Gemma. At table she usually put aside something for the poor, and then when there was a knock at the door, she would ask my permission to give it away. I used to answer: "Yes, but you must not bring them into the house." She then took whatever she could and brought it to them. She used to sit with the poor person at the back of the stairs in the loggia, and it was while I watched from a window looking on to the stairs that I heard the good advice she gave her poor.'

Gemma used to give the poor short and comprehensive instructions in the Catechism, hoping thereby to raise their thoughts to Heaven and thus make the sorrows of life more tolerable.

Aunt Cecilia declared that Gemma often urged her to visit certain sick people who otherwise would never have been visited, and for this purpose put forward such arguments that she was obliged to yield, and Mother Gemma attests that it can truly be said that all her aunt's charities were inspired by Gemma.

In fact Gemma had to be closely watched, for she would have given away everything that belonged to her, although she was scrupulous in her care of the goods of the house. She had not much to give, however. Her furniture consisted of a rough chest of drawers in which she kept her linen, and a little table. Every month her aunt at Camaiole sent her five or six lire, but her various charities claimed this money immediately. When she first came to the Gianninis' she had about thirty lire which she had given to Palmira Valentini for safe keeping. A certain person in need asked for it, and Gemma would have given it away at once, only she was accustomed to ask permission in such circumstances from Aunt Cecilia. However, both Aunt Cecilia and Monsignor

Volpi opposed this, and the former kept the money for the use of Gemma and her family.

But Gemma's charity was not confined to the material sphere. Matthew Giannini deposed that when she went with them to the country, 'she instructed the men and the boys, teaching them their catechism, and giving good advice to all.' And Joseph, the lawyer, adds: 'She taught the little children to have devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to their Guardian Angels.' Once when Euphemia gave way somewhat to vanity on going out for a walk with her father, Gemma met her on the stairs, and smilingly said: 'Whoever tries to please men, does not succeed in pleasing Jesus.' These words haunted the girl during the whole walk. Gemma never let slip a chance of doing good. On another occasion Euphemia asked her to give her a thought that would serve as a headline when practicing handwriting, and Gemma suggested the following words: 'If every one would endeavor to know and love God, this world would be changed into a Paradise.'

LIFE OF FAITH

Having studied Gemma's relations with her neighbor, we must now examine her relations with God. Leaving to another chapter the more particular and the extraordinary manifestations of her union with God, there will be recorded a few of the many depositions made in the Processes for the Beatification.. The following is by Aunt Cecilia:

"The Eucharist was her principal devotion. Communion meant everything to her, and she prepared for it the night before. In the church she remained beside me, with her eyes fixed upon the Tabernacle. When the moment came to receive Holy Communion I got up first and she followed me, and she always kept beside me with her hands under her

mantle. Afterwards we went to some place where there were no people, because as she herself used to say, she went, as it were, out of herself. People often came to ask her prayers. She used not to answer, and therefore lest they might perceive something, I asked Monsignor Volpi what I ought to do, and he said that I should tell them that she did not speak because after Holy Communion she was making her thanksgiving and did not want to be distracted. Some criticized her for this silence, although good people remarked upon her recollected and edifying demeanor. As a rule we heard two Masses, if there were two and if there was time. She continued her thanksgiving right through the morning, even after she went home and was occupied with her household duties. We used to go to several churches, and I did this in order that she might escape being noticed by people, although I did not tell her my reason for so doing.

'At Benediction in the evening she was as recollected as in the morning, with her eyes fixed upon the Tabernacle. Sometimes we made the Stations of the Cross, and one evening after we had made them with greater devotion and recollection than usual, she said: "Let us always make them like that!" And I believe she said this because we had prayed a little longer, especially at the Death of Jesus. We went to the church also for the Forty Hours or to hear a sermon, but we never went to the general Communion or to functions where there were great crowds, although we paid visits to churches where particular feasts were being celebrated. Sometimes she said to me: "We do not know how to behave when we are in the church. It would not be so if we could see how the Angels and the Seraphim around the Altar behave."

Her love for the Blessed Virgin was deep and full of understanding. 'I have now no earthly mother,' she used to say. "But instead I have a Heavenly Mother.' It gave her great pleasure to call the Blessed Virgin, Mom. One day

when she was before the altar of Our Lady of Sorrows in the Servite Church, she said to Aunt Cecilia: 'You also call her Mom, and you will see how pleased she will be!' Aunt Cecilia well remembered that day. It was May 8, the Feast of Our Lady of Pompeii. All the days consecrated by the Church to the Blessed Virgin were indeed festival days for her, but on this day after she had returned home from Holy Communion and Aunt Cecilia had begun the day's work, she immediately went into ecstasy. She spoke of the Holy Communion she had received, of the joy she had experienced, and the joy she would experience. As they were alone in the house, Aunt Cecilia allowed her to remain quiet, and the ecstasy lasted until midday.

She had also a great devotion to the Rosary, which she frequently recited. According to Aunt Cecilia, Gemma usually carried in her pocket but two things, her Rosary and her handkerchief. It happened, however, that she seldom got beyond the first decade, either of the ordinary Rosary, or of the Rosary of the Seven Dolours, without going out of herself, as she called it, that is, without going into ecstasy, with the beads in her hands and her flushed face and bright eyes fixed on Heaven. Mother Gemma Giannini attests that Gemma taught her and wrote out for her a beautiful prayer to the Blessed Virgin composed by Saint Alphonsus. And Joseph Giannini, the Advocate, testified that it was Gemma's delight to speak of the Blessed Virgin Mary with children.

In contact thus with Heaven, Gemma lived as if she were not of this earth. We have already spoken of her perfect detachment from everything that was not Jesus. We shall complete what we have said with the following deposition of Aunt Cecilia.

'If she had formed any friendships before she met me, I could not know of them. I believe she spoke freely with some

friends, knowing them to be pious souls. After she came to me, she wanted me to accompany her everywhere, and would rather wait until I was free than go with other people. Of politics or affairs like that she never spoke, and when they were spoken of she appeared not to understand or even not to hear. Gemma's world, especially during her last years with me, was very limited. Her acquaintances were restricted to the persons in the house, and to a few others whom she met only through absolute necessity and obedience. Whether they were seculars or religious, men or women, priests or nuns, she preferred not to have to meet them.'

Gemma had such a wealth of beautiful thoughts to occupy her, that she wished to avoid distraction. Seated on a stone near the kitchen door or in the courtyard of the Giannini home, calm, silent, smiling, she worked at knitting or mending stockings while her mind was far from the things of earth. Happy girl! She knew how to taste in exile the joys of the eternal Fatherland! Blessed was the family that gave shelter to such a guest!

HER SHARE IN THE SACRED PASSION - 'I AM A FLOWER OF THY WOUNDS'

The great and overpowering desire of the Saints has always been to make themselves as like as possible to Jesus Crucified who is the sublime model for all the predestined. This resemblance is principally achieved in the soul, within, but in a few Saints it has been made manifest externally, and they have borne visibly in their bodies the marks of Christ's Passion. However; all the Saints have not participated equally in drinking the chalice of the Savior's sufferings, but Gemma was privileged to drink so deeply of it that her Divine Spouse could say to her: 'My daughter, there are a few of your age in Heaven to whom it has been given to share so largely in My sufferings.'

One by one Gemma did indeed experience all the sorrows of the drama of the Sacred Passion, so that the prayer she had uttered was completely answered: 'Jesus is the Man of Sorrows, and I desire to become the daughter of sorrow.' This was always the one desire of her heart. 'When will the time come when I can embrace the Cross, and feel the thorns, the nails, the pains, and be as it were immersed in the Wounds of my Saviour?' She did indeed become so steeped in the Passion of Christ that she could say: 'I am fruit of Thy Passion, a flower of Thy Wounds.'

THE SUFFERINGS OF GETHSEMANI

Before the Redeemer of the world suffered the awful torture of the scourging, the crowning with thorns, and the Crucifixion, He underwent the Agony in the Garden, in which He shed His blood so copiously. As we have already seen, Gemma participated in this sorrow of the Passion by sweating blood when anyone blasphemed in her hearing.

Among the causes that contributed to the Agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemani were the sins and the ingratitude of mankind. The same considerations made Gemma not only sweat blood, but even shed tears of blood, as was testified by witnesses in the Processes for her Beatification. One of these, Mother Gemma Giannini, asserted that so great was Gemma's grief over the sins of the world and for those which she thought she herself had committed, that she often sweated blood and even wept tears of blood. 'She used to sweat blood because of the sins that gave such great offence to God,' declared Aunt Cecilia, 'often saying in ecstasy: "Revenge Thyself on me, but spare all sinners!"

This mysterious phenomenon manifested itself particularly once during a whole month when she was praying very earnestly for priests. The sweat and the tears of blood took

place about the same time as the Stigmata, and according to Father Germanus, from time to time on certain days.

THE THORNS

One of the most exquisite torments suffered by Jesus in His Passion was the crowning with thorns. For a long time Gemma was ambitious to wear this diadem, and her desire grew all the more ardent when Jesus Himself allowed her to see Him crowned with thorns, and asked her whether she would like to be crowned in the same way.

The first time that she mentioned this matter in her diary was on 19 July 1900. She wrote:

'This evening at last, after six days of suffering through Jesus withdrawing Himself from me, I am somewhat recollected. I began to pray as I am accustomed to do every Thursday. I began to think of the Crucifixion of Jesus. At first I did not feel anything, but after a few moments I became a little recollected, Jesus was near. To the recollection there succeeded what usually happens. I went into ecstasy and I found myself with Jesus Who was suffering excruciating pains. What was I to do, seeing Jesus suffer without being able to help Him? I felt then a great desire to suffer and I asked Jesus to grant me this grace. He granted my wish immediately and did what He had done on other occasions.'

And here, after having described how she received the crown of thorns from Jesus, she continued: 'And so I remained an hour suffering with Jesus. I should have liked to remain there the whole night.' On the following day, July 20, she wrote again: 'At three o'clock I was again in the presence of Jesus. He took off the crown from my head, and put it on His own head again, and I ceased to suffer pain.'

But Gemma began to live these 'sorrowful, but happy moments' long before this date. Her own words imply this: 'He did what He had done on other occasions.' Perhaps the King had placed His precious diadem upon the head of His beloved Gemma before He had allowed her to bear the marks of His Wounds. If we are not to confuse it with the sweat of blood over her whole body, of which we have spoken, this phenomenon took place during her first stay with the 'Mantellate' nuns. It was deposed in the Processes that one of these religious on arranging Gemma's hair noticed to her great surprise that every hair had a drop of blood on it.

Besides, the several witnesses who spoke of the manifestations of the Stigmata also mentioned that blood flowed freely from her head. But the evidence given by the priest, Laurence Agrimonti, deserves to be quoted. In his account of the extraordinary things that happened to Gemma during the first months of her stay with the Giannini family, that is in 1899 before she came to live permanently there, he writes: 'On August 20, I, the undersigned, saw Signorina Gemma Galgani, sitting in a chair, she being as in a trance, with her face and hands all stained with blood, and on her forehead certain marks in the form of a crown of thorns.'

Matthew Giannini deposed: 'I saw her and it seemed as if she had a drop of blood on every hair. It was her own blood. I saw the stains left on the cloths with which my sister wiped away the Mood, and these cloths were afterwards sent to the laundry. At first the blood exuded from the skin near the hair. Afterwards it came out all over her forehead, as if there was a crown of small red drops dripping down upon her face.' Similar descriptions were given by other members of the Giannini family. Joseph Giannini, the lawyer, gave the following evidence under oath:

'I saw on one occasion, I think it was on Good Friday something like a circle of blood on her forehead. Some drops were running down her temples, and it really seemed to me that she was exuding blood from the skin. I did not touch her, but my aunt wiped away the blood with white cloths and these showed the true red stain of blood. The blood, however, continued to come. It was certainly a sweat of blood. She was in ecstasy, and suffered much. The circle of blood reached across her forehead from the hair on one side to the hair on the other. I do not know, and I did not try to find out, whether the circle continued its way through the hair. The width of this circle was some millimetres in the top part of the forehead, leaving unaffected a little space between the circle and the beginning of the hair, as well as the lower part of the forehead upon which the blood was dripping.'

'The wearing of the crown commenced on Thursday at the usual hour,' said Mother Gemma Giannini, 'and ceased on Friday evening.' This same religious likewise deposed that she heard certain words spoken by Gemma in an ecstasy that preceded the manifestation of this phenomenon. From this testimony one must conclude that her Guardian Angel appeared to her, holding two crowns, one of roses and one of thorns, and invited her to choose. Gemma said: 'Better that which belongs to Jesus. As you well know, my dear Angel, I recognize that which is His. Give it to me.' It was observed that on Thursday she suffered more than on Friday evening, and when she was asked why this was, she explained that on Thursday the thorns were driven in, and on Friday they were taken out. Once it was noticed that there remained for a short time in the middle of her forehead near her hair a triangular wound, very distinct and visible. The pain of this coronation was intense. 'She lay stretched out on the bed with only her head to be seen,' said Mother Gemma Giannini. 'Blood was flowing in drops from her forehead,

from her eyes like unto tears which afterwards coagulated, from her nose even, and was running down upon her neck like two streamlets, so that gathering under her throat it formed a small mass of blood. In the morning she got up and washed and then not a trace of the phenomena I have described remained. She went to Mass and fulfilled her usual duties.'

Aunt Cecilia speaks of a special manifestation of this phenomenon which took place on Good Friday, 1902. Gemma was occupied with the devotion of the Three Hours' Agony, when there opened on her forehead a punctured wound which later on almost disappeared, only to come again every Thursday, and this continued until the end of June of the same year.

Cecilia Giannini, who more frequently than anyone was a spectator of these phenomena, in order to give an idea of how Gemma looked when she participated in the crowning with thorns, likened her to an Ecce Homo. And what a martyrdom Gemma must have suffered at these times! Certainly it would melt a heart of stone to hear her repeat in ecstasy: 'O Jesus, my head! It is too much - I cannot bear it any longer, I cannot bear it any longer! My Jesus, help me!' Nevertheless she wanted all this pain, as a proof that Jesus loved her, and as a demonstration of the love she bore Him in return. 'O Jesus, show me that You love me. At other times when I asked Thee, You didst allow me to feel the Wounds of Thy Passion, the thorns. I give myself to Thee, O Jesus. O God, more, more, O Jesus, still more! Now, Jesus, I know that You love me!'

THE WOUNDS AND SCOURGING

Gemma desired a still deeper participation in the Passion. She wanted to bear the wounds, and with the wounds, the

pain of the scourging. 'O my God, give me Thy wounds; they are mine and no longer Thine; give them to me. Quick, O Jesus; if You wait I shall die!' In her abounding love, she longed for a share, not in a few, but in every one of the torments of the Passion. 'O Jesus, let me share in all Thy sorrows; let me suffer while I love, suffer for Jesus who loves, and die suffering for Jesus!'

God answered the prayers of Gemma, not only by satisfying these desires, but also by sharpening them still more.' This morning after Holy Communion,' she wrote, 'Jesus said to me: "If it is true that you love Me so much as you say, I want you to bear My image impressed upon you. Look at Me! You will see Me ill-treated, despised by all, dead on a Cross. And I invite you also to die on a Cross for me.'" Then He showed her the instruments of the Passion. How such a sight made her heart beat! This is how she writes to her spiritual Father: 'It seems impossible; Jesus is so determined. He came yesterday evening before I began to suffer. He came and He had in His hands all the instruments of the Passion. I do not know what He meant. He showed them to me one by one. When He had finished I wanted to say something, but at that moment I could not say' a word, and Jesus went away and left me alone.' But she consoles herself with the thought that Thursday is near. 'Father, this evening is Thursday evening!' And in another letter she explains why she looks forward with such joyous expectation to the Holy Hour: 'How happy I am after I have spent an hour compassionating Jesus! When Thursday evening draws near, I feel absolutely different, so happy: For me Friday is always a festival day.'

These divine favors added new fuel to the fire of love that burnt within her, and she cried out to Jesus: 'Love has indeed slain Thee! My Jesus, make me also die of love! Life will be a torment. There is no one in the world who can satisfy my affections, only You. The thorns, the Cross, the

nails, all are the work of love.' 'Yes, I love the Cross, the Cross alone, because I see it always on Thy shoulders. I see well, my Jesus, that all my love is for Thee and Thy sufferings.' 'The Wounds of Jesus speak to me with such sweet violence that I should like, O my Jesus, I should like my heart to be possessed with but one desire, such as the saints had, that I might be able in some way to love Thee.'

The phenomena which we have described continued to be manifested in Gemma until February, 1901, when by order of her spiritual director, she prayed to Jesus to be freed from them. Her prayers were heard. But although the Stigmata disappeared, a new torture took their place - the scourging. The following is the account she gave of it to Father Germanus, her spiritual director:

'Something has happened which I never experienced before. You know that on Thursday and Friday Jesus gives me a little present, and this week another still more dear to me was added. He allowed me to feel some of the blows of His scourging over all the body, very painful, Father, but it was nothing compared with the merciless blows which Jesus received. You remember, we prayed together that Jesus might take away every external sign, and behold Jesus has added another in its place. Viva Gesu! May He be infinitely thanked! Nevertheless He assured me that to please me He would take away the external signs, but He added: "Your sufferings will increase and a different life will begin for you.'

To Monsignor Volpi she afterwards wrote thus:

'It was just at the time when I was praying Jesus to take away all external signs, but Jesus instead added another. He allowed me to feel a few blows of His scourging. To the pain in the hands, feet, head and heart, this was also added. May He be for ever thanked!

'So about five o'clock I began to feel so great a sorrow for my sins that I seemed to be beside myself through fright; but to this there succeeded almost immediately a hope in the mercy of God which calmed me. I did not feel any pain yet. After about an hour I seemed to see my Guardian Angel who was holding two crowns in his hands, one of thorns made in the form of a hat, and the other made of the whitest lilies. The sight of the Angel caused me as usual to be a little afraid, but afterwards it caused me joy. Together we adored the Majesty of God and then showing me the two crowns, he asked me which one I should like. I did not want to answer because the Father had forbidden me to do so, but he insisted, saying that it was he who was commanding it, he blessed me and made an offering of me to the Eternal Father, saying to me that I was to forget myself and think only of sinners that night. I was persuaded by these words, and I told the Angel that I would have chosen that of Jesus. He showed me the one of thorns. I kissed it several times, and after he had placed it on my head the Angel disappeared. I began then to suffer in my hands, feet and head, and later on in all the body, and I felt heavy blows. I spent the night in that way, and in the morning I forced myself to get up, so that no one would know these things. The blows and the pain I felt until about two o'clock. At that time the Angel came back, and to tell the truth I could scarcely bear it any longer - and he made me feel well, saying that Jesus had had compassion on me because I was yet a little one, and incapable of suffering with Jesus until the hour in which He expired. But I was worried about one thing, the marks had not disappeared. In the morning when I received Holy Communion I prayed very fervently to Jesus that the marks would be taken away, and He promised that on the day of His Passion He would take them away.'

From the documents quoted, it must be inferred that Gemma began to suffer the new torment of the scourging about 7 or

8 February 1901, and that the Stigmata ceased on 12 February, the Feast of the Commemoration of the Passion. The phenomenon was repeated on the four Fridays of March, and on a few other occasions, as we can see from her letters, although we cannot say exactly how many times they occurred because they passed unobserved. The following is an account given by Cecilia Giannini of the phenomena that happened in March. We have compressed it somewhat:

'Some weeks she suffered neither the Stigmata nor the crowning with thorns. I was pleased. One evening, however, I saw that she was suffering very much, and went to bed earlier than usual, and seeing this I watched her. I thought she was ill and I was not thinking of the extraordinary things, when suddenly I saw little streaks of blood on the backs of her hands. I uncovered her neck and her arms, turning the sleeves of her nightdress up a little. Gemma was in ecstasy. But I was not thinking of what it could be, and believing that it was her own blood that was trickling from her skin, I tried to wipe away the blood from the back of the hand with a cloth which became stained. It was her own blood. I could not imagine how the thing was happening, but I heard her say in the ecstasy: "Are these Thy lashes, Jesus?" And that made me think it was the scourging. This was on the first Friday of March, the manifestation having commenced on the Thursday evening before. It lasted until about four or five in the afternoon of Friday. This was repeated on the Thursday and Friday of the next three weeks of March. In these other ecstasies the scourging was more extensive. In the second I noticed that the skin opened under the streaks of blood. In the third the wounds were wider, and I counted eleven wounds of which three were near the neck, two on the knees, and the others on the calves of the legs and on the arms. I did not uncover from under the neck to the knees, but I noticed that her nightdress was all stained with blood. I did not uncover her

shoulders nor her back. On the shoulder of the nightdress, on the right shoulder, I believe, there was a big blood-stain, and besides there was blood all over the bed. A few days after the fourth Friday I said to her: "But tell me this. At first there were only red streaks, and now there are cuts and wounds. Why?" She answered: "At first they were whips, and now they are scourges."

As happened with the other wounds of which we have spoken, all signs of this phenomenon disappeared after two or three days. On one occasion Aunt Cecilia bandaged two of these wounds on her shin, but they would not heal and even festered, whereas left unbandaged they healed of their own accord.

The wound on her shoulder mentioned by Cecilia Giannini was so big and so deep as to compel her to walk bent over towards that side. She felt the effect of it longer than the effects of the other wounds. One witness deposed that having placed a hand a few times on Gemma's shoulder, she said that she felt great pain there. These things happened until April 5 of the same year, when at the voice of obedience the phenomena disappeared.

The following extracts were taken down while she was in ecstasy contemplating the sorrowful mystery of the scourging.

'O Jesus to what a state You art reduced! Oh, the holy Person of Jesus has become a plaything for all! They blaspheme Thee, my Jesus, they treat Thee roughly, they curse Thee. O Jesus, I am surprised that although I see Thee in the midst of these humiliations, I do not wish to hear them spoken of. Oh, if I were able, Jesus, with my blood I should wish, I should wish to wash with my blood all those places where I see Thee outraged! No more blows on Thee, O Jesus. You have not

deserved them; I, yes; You, no! It is I who am the sinner, You art innocent.' 'Tonight, O Jesus, I wish to suffer all; if You also wish to suffer, let us suffer together. Let me be one victim with Thee. Art You pleased, oh Jesus? Strengthen me for this, oh Jesus; I do not ask Thee anything more. Poor Jesus! What a number of blows, poor Jesus! Those bad men are not sparing Thee, but Thy patience is not exhausted. Leave Jesus alone, beat me! Why revenge yourselves upon Jesus; revenge yourselves upon me. More still, O Jesus; more, oh God! Still more, Jesus - and more, Jesus, more! My Jesus, help me in this hour! Oh Jesus, to whom do You wish that I go for help?'

And the blows rained down upon the sufferer, so that the spectators of this scene sometimes thought she would die of pain.

ADDED SUFFERINGS

Although the exterior manifestations ceased God allowed her to suffer just as much as before in those places. She did not shed blood, but that very fact made her pain all the greater, for the flowing of the blood had given her some alleviation.

God, however, did grant her relief in the mouthfuls of blood which came from her heart. This is how she writes to her spiritual director: 'My Father, my heart being small needs to be enlarged, but there is no room. It desires to expand, but I am so small; Jesus is infinite.' And on another occasion: 'Live, Jesus! Towards half past one my little heart could not contain itself and I began to spit up blood in great quantities.' And again: 'I have disobeyed Monsignor. In forbidding me all those things on Friday, he has forbidden me also to spit blood. Until now I have obeyed, but this morning - it was the Feast of Saint Paul of the Cross, who

himself had suffered so much from the same most desirable infirmity - about an hour after Communion, in a violent movement of my heart, a little of it came away.'

Gemma's heart, all on fire as it was with love, could not but be affected by such ardent desires, and indeed it was so affected that three of her ribs were displaced on that side. 'Imagine,' she wrote, 'Jesus told me some time back that they (the feelings of oppression in her heart) would every day grow more painful so that I should become unconscious, that in one of these, I do not know how to explain it, I should die. Live, Jesus!' But of these phenomena which have been verified we shall speak later on.

To make the image of Jesus Crucified in Gemma more complete something was yet wanting. Jesus had been despised, humiliated, mocked, spat upon in His Passion, and so was Gemma. Let us take a few facts from the Processes. 'Imagine anyone paying attention to an hysterical girl like that!' This was what she sometimes overheard. And often when she went to the church for confession, she was made to wait a long time because no one would tell the priest she was there, or she was found fault with because she went to confession so frequently. At times they were slow in calling the priest to give her Holy Communion, and often her requests received this answer: 'Go and see whether you can succeed in bothering another priest.' Gemma, however, was always calm and patient, and excused them, saying: 'They would come if they were able.'

According to Thecla Natali, Gemma was frequently worried by the street urchins because of the Crucifix she wore, and because of the way she dressed, but she never lost her patience with them. On one occasion in the Via Zecca when she was on her way from the convent she was seriously molested by some boys. She was rescued by some people,

who then accompanied her home. Although the boys had gone so far as to spit in her face, she remained calm throughout. These humiliations, far from upsetting her, united her all the more to Jesus. 'One evening,' deposed Annetta Giannini, 'when Aunt Cecilia, Gemma and I were entering the Church, some boys began to annoy Gemma, but she was not in the least angry and said: "By being despised by the world I am hoping to become a saint."'

The outrageously scornful words which were cast at her in the Giannini home by a religious from whom she least expected them, resulted in her love for humiliations being more clearly manifested. 'You worthless consumptive and tiresome nuisance, when will you die and cease to soil this house with your presence?' Gemma, far from being upset, answered calmly: 'You are right; what you say is true.'

Gemma was to know the pain even of the Crucifixion, including the contraction of the limbs, the displacement of the bones, the terrible hours of agony, and a desolate death while abandoned by ~ Heaven and earth. All this we shall see in its place. She had to experience in life the atrocious torment of thirst which Jesus felt when dying. This is what she wrote to her spiritual director about this thirst:

'Yesterday was Friday and I felt ill. All my nerves were racked, and this caused a tremendous thirst. I have had this thirst before but never so great as this time. And then I noticed this curious thing. Water, or anything one drinks, ought to quench my thirst, but instead it only increased my thirst and tormented me more.'

Of a final trait of resemblance between Jesus and Gemma we shall have to speak later on. Here we shall only mention it. The Gospel relates of Jesus that after His death His side was pierced by the lance of a soldier, and that from the wound

blood and water came forth. Gemma was also wounded in the side after death and from that wound blood came forth. Truly a creature that thus bore in her soul and body the lineaments of Jesus Crucified must be considered predestined.

SUPERNATURAL INSTRUCTION

Participating thus abundantly in the sufferings of her Divine Redeemer, it is not to be wondered at that Gemma was ever increasing in her love for Him and ever more eager to suffer. These were the lessons that she learned daily at that school. 'Jesus has always two flames in His hand,' she wrote, 'and He explained to me that one is the flame of love and the other the flame of sorrow.' And these flames did indeed penetrate into the happy soul of the Servant of God, and ended by setting it on fire. Here are some of the heavenly teachings which Gemma received on this subject from her Angel or directly from Jesus:

'The Angel says to me that by means of suffering I can become like to Jesus, and show Him my love and be assured of that of Jesus.'

"Sometimes Jesus says to me: "See, My daughter, the greatest gift that I can make to a soul that is dear to Me, is the gift of suffering." And then I cannot resist throwing myself at the feet of Jesus and thanking Him so much, because it seems to me that He may give even to me some little thing to suffer for His sake.'

The Angel added: "Look at this Cross! It is the Cross that your Father presents to you. It is a book which you must read every day. Promise me, my child, promise me, that you will carry this Cross with love, and that you will esteem it better

than all the joys of the world." 'I promised him all he asked and with trembling hands I embraced the Cross.'

'After an hour of suffering the Angel came. I did not receive him at all well; I asked him to go away. As always, these visions at first afflict me a little, but afterwards my heart becomes filled with happiness. "What is it that pleases Jesus most?" he asked me. "Suffering," I answered. "And do you wish to please Him - to suffer - and how much?" "Very much," I replied in my mind. He said to me that my desire that Jesus remain in my heart should be satisfied, and that I should have to suffer very much. The Angel then blessed me and went away, crying out: "Live, Jesus, live, the Cross of Jesus!"'

'The Angel said: "The measure of suffering is according to the weight that the hand of Jesus gives to it, that is, according to the amount He desires to be felt."

'And Jesus: "Embrace the Cross, My daughter, and be certain that whilst you are satisfying your desire of suffering you are satisfying My heart; and remember, the more bitter the Cross seems to your heart, the more agreeable it is to Mine."

'Jesus has said to me: "Do you know why I desire to send crosses to the souls that are dear to Me? I desire to possess them entirely, and for that reason I surround them with crosses, and I shut them in with tribulations so that they may not escape out of My hands; for that reason I spread thorns everywhere so that giving their affections to no one they may seek all their pleasure in Me alone. My daughter, if the Cross was not felt, it could not be called a Cross. Be certain that if you stand beneath the Cross you will never be lost. The Devil has no power over those souls who weep near the Cross. My daughter, how many would have abandoned

Me, if I had not crucified them. The Cross is a very precious gift, and many virtues can be learned through it."

"When I shall be a spouse of blood to you," said Jesus, "I will love you, but you must be as one crucified. Prove your love for Me as I have proved My love for you; and you know how-by suffering pains and crosses without number. You must consider yourself honored when I treat you thus, and when I lead you through thorny and sorrowful paths. It is with My permission that the Devil torments you, that the world fills you with disgust, that the persons dearest to you cause you affliction. And you, My daughter, must think of only one thing during this time, that is, of exercising great virtues. Keep on the path of the Divine will, and humble yourself, and be convinced that if I nail you to the Cross, I love you."

"My daughter," Jesus said to me, "if you truly love Me, you will love Me even in darkness." The Lord delights in playing with souls that are very dear to Him, but He plays with them because He loves them. Now He consoles them, now He allows them to become well esteemed by mankind, and afterwards He allows them to become a laughingstock to the world. At one time He makes them so courageous that Hell has no terrors for them, and at another time, He allows them to be frightened at the least thing. Whoever thinks that he is suffering, knows little; but whoever suffers and yet thinks that he suffers little or naught, is enlightened. Whoever is humiliated on earth, is in Heaven and on the Cross; whoever has the first place on earth, has the last before God. He who knows the Cross, desires it; he who does not know it, runs away from it.'

Gemma was meditating on and even living the Passion of Jesus Christ, and from this meditation she drew all her consolation. 'To meditate on Thy Passion, O Jesus, has always been a great relief to holy souls.' And this is how she wrote

of the fruits she gathered from this meditation. 'Every day I make a meditation, but always on the Passion. If I did not do so, it would seem to me that Jesus would reprove me thus: "See, My daughter, here I am on the Cross, through love, a victim for your many faults. Consider well My sufferings, and then deny Me, if you can, the tender compassion that I deserve."'

'When I see Jesus weep, my own heart is transfixed with sorrow; I think how I have by my sins aggravated the oppression which Jesus suffered in the Garden. At that time Jesus saw all my sins, all my omissions, and besides, He saw the place I should have occupied in Hell, if Thy Heart, oh Jesus, had not granted me pardon.'

'When I am looking at the Crucifix, it seems to me that Jesus turns to me with words of reproof and says: "If you allow yourself to sin you will crucify Me anew. Are not these sufferings enough?" Mio Dio! After these words could I hold out any longer? But Jesus turning to me, very pleased, added and repeated: "Love Me as much as you can, and I shall give you all that you desire. Love Me with all your heart and I shall forgive you all your sins." Oh the infinite goodness of Jesus! All He asks of me is love!'

'Many times I have asked Jesus to teach me the true way of loving Him, and it seems to me that then Jesus allows me to see all His open Wounds, and that He says: "Look, My daughter, look how I have suffered! Do you see this Cross, these nails, these thorns? They are the works of love. Look and learn how to love."

HEROIC RESOLUTIONS

The lessons which were taught in this school of love and suffering penetrated into the soul of the holy girl. The

resolutions which she was thereby induced to make are among the most heroic that can be conceived, and the maxims she formulated almost divinely sublime.

'I shall compensate Thee, O Jesus,' she exclaims, 'by treating myself as Thy slave, and by putting my shoulders under Thy Cross.'

'Suffering will raise my spirits, and far from discouraging me will give me the strength necessary to correspond with Thy grace.'

'Oh, how much I realize that by doing what the goodness of Jesus wills, every cross is changed into joy, suffering even becomes too pleasant! He has neither cross nor fear who is closely united with Jesus.'

'My heart possesses Jesus and possessing Jesus I feel that I can smile even in the midst of so many tears. I feel, yes, I feel happy even in great suffering.'

'O Jesus, whether You caress me or strike me, it is the same to me. Yea, when You do strike me, I am all the more pleased, because it is really what I deserve.'

'It ought not be that suffering should adapt itself to us, but we ought to adapt ourselves to suffering.'

'Whoever loves Jesus has sufficient strength to suffer any cross whatsoever.'

'Whoever truly loves, suffers gladly.'

'The more a cross is contrary to my desires, the more it is like to Thine, O Jesus.'

'The masters of this world teach always with the voice, but You with suffering.'

'Who knows how many would have abandoned Thee, if You had not held them to the Cross.'

'In loving it is You who delight my soul, and in suffering it is I who delight Thy Soul.'

'Why are you so afflicted, O my soul? You offend your Beloved if you do not embrace the Cross with gladness. If you do not send your thoughts to Calvary, you are not concerned about Paradise.'

'O Jesus, You give crosses to them who love Thee!'

'O Cross, when I am near thee I feel strong!'

'All my days are sown with crosses. O holy Cross, I have embraced thee!'

'May my life be a continual sacrifice! May You increase my sufferings, my humiliations!'

'If I had to live in the world without suffering I should say to Thee: "Let me rather die now. Either crucify my soul or make me die!'

Upon hearing a cry like this - a cry that only the love of the Crucified could inspire, there remains only one thing for us to do, that is, to throw ourselves on our knees and exclaim with Blessed Gemma herself: 'Oh Passion of Christ! Ye Angels of Heaven, bow down with me in honor of the Passion of Jesus; together let us catch the Blood of Jesus! 'Passion of Jesus, I love Thee! Angels of Heaven, come, let us all adore the Passion of Jesus.

THE TEST - FULFILLING A MISSION

Father Gaetano had kept his word. He had told Gemma that he would think over the mysterious things she had communicated and give his opinion of them later on. And he now pronounced his verdict. Moreover, in order to make it easier for Gemma to tell Monsignor Volpi about these things, he came to an understanding with her that he himself should first speak to him about them. Monsignor Volpi welcomed both Father Gaetano and Gemma kindly, listened to them, approved of the action of the extraordinary confessor, approved also of the vows Gemma had taken, but advised her to add another, that is, one of candor with her confessor. As regards the Stigmata, however, he withheld his decision.

Father Gaetano was not content with having spoken to Monsignor Volpi. He wished to see the Stigmata for himself, and to leave a written declaration of what he had seen. As a matter of fact he did leave such a declaration. For this purpose Gemma was taken to the Giannini home by her friend Palmira Valentini and by her little sister Julia. In their presence Father Gaetano told Gemma that he desired to see the Stigmata. She obeyed and Father Gaetano was thus able to examine at his ease the backs and the palms of her hands. Besides, he told Palmira to examine, in her own home, the wound in the side, but she was unable to do this because Gemma would not permit it. After the failure of this attempt at examination and while she was still at Palmira's home, Gemma retired to pray before an image of the Heart of Jesus and fell into an ecstasy. Her sister Julia called her, and receiving no answer burst into tears. Gemma's face was flushed, and her wounds were even more noticeable than in the morning. Later on she came to herself. The Stigmata continued to be visible all that evening.

THE TWO SIGNS

Another son of Saint Paul of the Cross now comes upon the scene, Father Peter Paul Moreschini, who was later Archbishop of Camerino, where he died a holy death in 1919. It was on 29 August 1899, at the Gianninis' that he first heard of Gemma. Father Peter Paul was then the Provincial of the Roman-Tuscan Province of the Passionists.

Cecilia Giannini, although herself convinced that the phenomena associated with Gemma were from God, nevertheless felt she had need of advice in the matter, especially since Monsignor Volpi's hesitation. She therefore spoke to Father Peter Paul. He, however, was not impressed. He considered that Gemma was under a delusion and that Signora Giannini had been carried away by enthusiasm. He had not yet met Gemma. Even when she was introduced to him, it seemed, as he himself confessed, that he had before him merely a stupid girl.

When they were left alone Gemma asked him if he would use his influence to have her received, even as a lay-sister, among the Passionist Nuns at Corneto. He received this request coldly; more, he rejected it with scorn. Gemma rejoiced in this humiliation, and showed that she was not in the least disturbed. This deeply impressed Father Peter Paul, who began to think that she was far from stupid as he had thought. He therefore said to her: 'If you want me to interest myself in getting you received by the Passionists, it is necessary that I should first find out whether God really calls you to that life. Tell Jesus to give me two signs that I have asked from Him at this moment.' Gemma prayed. The two signs asked interiorly by Father Peter Paul were that he should see the Stigmata and the sweat of blood.'

Those phenomena, as the reader well knows, took place every week from Thursday to Friday. Although it was only Wednesday, God was pleased to answer Gemma's prayer. In the afternoon Gemma went to make the Holy Hour before the big Crucifix in the house. After a little while she went into ecstasy and began to sweat blood copiously. Aunt Cecilia, who was watching, immediately called Father Peter Paul, who could then easily see with his own eyes the phenomenon in the Servant of God. He afterwards withdrew, his heart a prey to a deep emotion. When she recovered, Gemma said to Aunt Cecilia: 'The Father has asked two signs from Jesus; and Jesus has told me that He has given him one and will give him the other.'

At about five o'clock that same evening two very red marks appeared on the back and on the palm of Gemma's hands, and after five minutes she was again rapt in ecstasy, and the Stigmata were seen impressed on her hands.

Signora Cecilia then called Father Peter Paul, whom she had asked a little while before, that is at the first appearance of the red marks, whether this was not the second sign he had solicited. He, however, had given no answer. Accompanied by the priest, Laurence Agrimonti, he entered the room where Gemma was, and thus assisted at this second phenomenon. 'This is what I saw at that moment,' he wrote afterwards. 'Although her body was deprived of every movement it was most flexible. Her face was like that of a corpse, her hands as it were contracted in the fingers and the middle of the hand, so that on the palms as well as on the backs of the hands I saw actual wounds of this size.' And here Father Peter Paul drew an oval figure about eighteen millimeters in length, and ten in width at the widest point.

Thus a remarkable man was won to Gemma's cause. After being Vice-General of the Passionists, the Apostolic Visitor to

at least twelve dioceses in Italy, Pius X, recognizing his holiness, learning, and prudence, appointed him Archbishop of Camerino. He saw Gemma on several other occasions, particularly during the last months of that same year and in 1900 and 1901. He began to study the holy life of the girl more than her supernatural gifts, and was so edified that later on when he was called upon to give evidence in the Processes for the Beatification, his long deposition was a splendid panegyric. But between his first visit and these others, certain things occurred of which we must treat here.

DOUBTING

On the following day Father Peter Paul spoke about the matter to Monsignor Volpi, and five days later sent him from Florence an account of what he had seen in Gemma. He wrote:

'I saw with my own eyes the wounds on both sides of her hands and that they were truly torn open. At the end of the ecstasy everything healed up, leaving the scars alone remaining. How could such a wound heal thus instantaneously by natural means? I do not venture to say that it is the work of God but I am inclined to think that it is, for this girl is most humble, obedient, innocent, and a lover, in a particular way, of suffering. All the same I still think that you ought to place her for a short time in a Convent for the reasons I have given you.'

This new attestation united to that of Father Gaetano, far from freeing Monsignor Volpi from the doubts he had in regard to the mysterious phenomena which had manifested themselves in his holy penitent, perplexed him all the more. He felt it to be a very delicate position. He knew Gemma's humility and sincerity better than anyone else. But could

she not be the victim of a diabolical illusion? And yet how could Satan rule over such a soul?

Monsignor Volpi, however, must not be blamed for this hesitation. If he had acted precipitately in such an important matter, he would have been lacking in prudence. He himself had seen the Stigmata in Gemma. This fact is mentioned in the Processes by Palmira Valentini:

'One day Gemma came to my home and I saw that she had the Stigmata. Monsignor Volpi, who was also my spiritual director, had told me that when Gemma had the Stigmata I was to bring her to him. I did not like to go into the presence of Monsignor with Gemma, but he said: "You also come along." And then in my presence also he saw Gemma's Stigmata. They were clearly visible as on other occasions. With an ingenuous simplicity which is more than rare Gemma showed him the Stigmata. Monsignor Volpi, however, said nothing except these words: "Gemma, do not let your hands be seen; keep them covered; you understand, the children would only laugh at you."'

Aunt Cecilia had to speak to him frequently after this, in order to get advice as to the way she ought to act with regard to Gemma. According to Cecilia, Monsignor told her to speak to a certain doctor whom he named. She did so. The doctor listened in silence, but gave her no other answer or satisfaction than saying that persons suffering from hysteria could easily manifest those things.

To say that Monsignor Volpi alone was unhappy because of this state of affairs would be a mistake. Because her confessor was in doubt, Gemma was also worried, fearful, as she was, to deceive or be deceived. She felt she owed a great deal to Monsignor Volpi, who since she was a little child had helped her in all her spiritual difficulties, and

therefore the fact that he suffered because of her could not fail to make her suffer also. On his side, without knowing it, he was the cause of great sorrow to Gemma. For he had commanded her to ask God to take away every external manifestation of these extraordinary things, and to lead her henceforth along the common path. This was exactly what Gemma herself desired, and God heard her prayer and granted her request. But God is not obliged to obey His creatures, and after a short time these singular manifestations reappeared. Gemma, mindful of the command she had received, endeavored to reject them. It was a struggle which only a soul on fire with the love of God can really understand. This martyrdom was increased when she heard Monsignor say that if God would not make things clear, he would never believe in her imaginings. 'I have asked Jesus,' she wrote to him, 'to let you understand things, if He is really the cause of these happenings, and to take them away because I don't want them if the devil is the cause. Were my imagination to blame, I would not allow these things to happen any more.' And she prayed to Jesus: 'If it be You, O Jesus, who cause these things, in Thy mercy, make it known. Otherwise we cannot go on thus, neither I, nor my confessor, nor those who know about these things.'

RECOURSE TO SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION

To resolve his perplexity Monsignor Volpi decided to submit the phenomena to a scientific investigation. He therefore told Cecilia Giannini that on the following Friday, September 8, the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, he would bring a doctor along with him to examine Gemma. This was the same doctor to whom Cecilia Giannini had already spoken. Cecilia did not tell anyone about Monsignor's intentions.

As the reader will remember, the Giannini family was then living in the country. Nevertheless Chevalier Matthew and a few of the family were in Lucca that day.

At ten o'clock in the morning Gemma was in ecstasy. When it was over, Gemma took a pen and wrote a few lines to Monsignor, telling him that if he wished to come he should come alone, but that he must not bring anyone with him, that Jesus was not pleased and would let him see nothing. She gave the letter open to Aunt Cecilia, who read it, carefully remembering its contents, and then closed it.

Monsignor pursued his intention, and at about two o'clock in the afternoon arrived at the Gianninis' with the doctor in whom he placed such confidence. It must be admitted that this doctor was a very worthy and religious man, and Gemma herself heard Jesus say so when she was in ecstasy. The sentiments of the two visitors were entirely different, however. Monsignor, in doubt, was in search of the truth; the doctor, on the other hand, was hoping to restore the Bishop's peace of mind by proving that it was a case of hysteria. As for Cecilia Giannini, she was so certain of the holy girl that she did not fear any investigation.

An hour before, Gemma had retired into her room and had fallen into ecstasy. Blood was flowing from near her forehead and from the open Stigmata in her hands. Cecilia Giannini, the Chevalier Matthew, his wife Justina, and several others belonging to the family, saw her in this state. Cecilia ran joyfully to tell Monsignor. 'Come, come,' she said, 'now is the very best time.' In the presence of all, the doctor took a towel, dipped it in water and wiped Gemma's hands and forehead. The red-colored stains disappeared, the blood ceased, and not a scar could be seen. Profound disillusionment for all!

As was natural, the doctor rejoiced over his victory. Gemma, on the other hand, all absorbed in the contemplation of the Passion, was asking Jesus for a greater and greater share in His sufferings; and He was preparing for her there and then a chalice of suffering, full to the brim and bitter.

When she came to herself, both Monsignor and the doctor had gone. She had not seen them, but she noticed that a big change had taken place in the attitude of those around her. What a disillusionment for the charitable, pious and generous Giannini family! They thought they had a saint under their roof, and she turns out to be only a sick girl, somewhat mad, a deceiver! But no, it could not be so! She was not anything like that. A soul like hers, so sincere, so ingenuous, would be incapable of it! Even a doubt was inadmissible.

To deepen her sorrow, the Lord allowed His servant to see the changed thoughts of those about her. Towards the end of the ecstasy He had revealed to her that the doctor had come and had seen nothing, and that a great cross was awaiting her. What was she to do, hedged in as she was by these unfavorable circumstances? Gemma knew that she was in the hands of God. What then had she to fear? So without anxiety, calmly, she awaited the tempest.

At about four o'clock in the afternoon of that same day, Aunt Cecilia, who herself felt the need of some distraction from these oppressive thoughts, suggested to Gemma that they should go out to Benediction somewhere. Gemma, as usual most obedient, answered: 'Whatever you like.' The following is Cecilia's deposition on what happened on this occasion:

'When we reached the Guinigi tower, Gemma said to me: "Take me to Jesus for a little while?" And I asked her: "Would you like to go to a church?" And I took her to the Church of

Saint Simon and Saint Jude which was not much frequented and where we sat in a corner near one another. For about an hour Gemma, immovable, rigid, with her hands stretched out over her knees, remained gazing at the Tabernacle. I was watching her all the time, with the idea in my mind that if the Stigmata came, I could make certain whether she caused them herself. Then she awakened out of her ecstasy, and said to me: "I should like to tell you something, but I am very much ashamed." I encouraged her to speak. She said the same thing again, but when I insisted that she should tell me, she raised her hands and letting me see the palms, said: "And I really saw blood on the palms, and on the backs of the hands a little wound with drops of fresh blood. Then I thought that I should like Monsignor Volpi to see her in this state, but I had not the courage to bring her to him. myself. However, as we were leaving the church we met Palmira Valentini. I asked her to take Gemma to Monsignor, who was at that time in the Church of the Guardian Angels, where he was giving a retreat to some children in preparation for their first Communion, and to tell him that Gemma wanted to speak to him alone. Gemma spoke alone to Monsignor Volpi, related everything to him and showed him the Stigmata. Monsignor tried to wipe away with a handkerchief the blood which was oozing from the wounds in the hands. Gemma herself told me this.'

Monsignor Volpi, however, declared that Palmira Valentini brought Gemma, not to the Church of the Guardian Angels, but to the management office of the Matthew Cividali Schools which had been founded by him. 'I remember,' he said, 'that when showing me her hands, she was very much confused, and understanding her embarrassment, I did not make a close examination and sent her away. I confess that I had the impression that the fact was not natural, considering that on the following day, as I had been assured, the wound had entirely disappeared.' [The discrepancy is

not important, because these places are very near one another]

A little while after Gemma wrote to Monsignor Volpi:

'Forgive me if I trouble you this morning. If you were to see how many have changed their attitude towards me since that day! It seems to me that I can almost see the thoughts that are passing in the minds of others. Yesterday evening Jesus let me know that many people are thinking evil of me. One thinks that I am a somnambulist, others think that I am ill, others again that it is I myself who scratch the marks in my hands and feet. Jesus told me that He has permitted all these things to happen, and that He will permit even worse things. Nevertheless He has assured me that by means of the Father He will convince my confessor, but that He will permit the other persons to continue in the same frame of mind.'

In another letter she deals with the attempt to examine the phenomena:

'If you had been alone Jesus would indeed have convinced you. Today when I began to make the exercise of the Three Hours' Agony I understood what had happened to me. Yesterday evening Jesus let me know that you would come, but I did not want you to come because I was ashamed. In the end I conquered myself. At first I felt great repugnance; then Jesus said to me: "Do you not remember that I told you some time ago that a day would come when no one would believe you. That day has come! Oh, how much more acceptable you are to me when you are despised than when everyone regarded you as a saint!" Jesus then told me that there was another person with you, a doctor, and that he saw nothing. Today Jesus desired that I should make a sacrifice, and I have willingly done so; let them think that it

is hysteria, as the doctor says it is; because they call it that, Jesus loves me all the more. However, He said that in comparison with what I must yet go through this is nothing. Later when Jesus came back He told me that I was to tell you that He would cause the things in such a way that no one would perceive them. Jesus said that He is satisfied that some persons have seen what has taken place but that for the present He wishes no one else to see those things. You will be convinced.'

NEW PROOFS. FURTHER HESITATION

The sight of the Stigmata that evening, and the letters which he received from Gemma, only increased Monsignor Volpi's perplexity. Had he been too hasty in believing the doctor, even though he was a man for whom he had the greatest esteem, or in trusting to what he himself had seen and heard? Later on when these events were but memories, he wrote: 'Today after some years of experience I am persuaded that such things are permitted by God in order to give mankind a palpable and external proof of an interior and spiritual action which He sometimes produces in privileged souls.'

That same September Father Gaetano arrived at the Gianninis' to take up Gemma's cause once more. He was much moved by the account of what had taken place. However, he was to see these mysterious phenomena again. As a matter of fact he tried the doctor's test and afterwards gave the following account of it to Monsignor Volpi: 'There were actual wounds in her hands; I say actual wounds because they were deep, and although they were washed three or four times by us they did not disappear.'

Father Peter Paul also was able to witness, even frequently, the marvellous things which God accomplished in His

servant, and to describe them to Monsignor Volpi, who then asked him to examine Gemma when an occasion offered, and for this purpose gave him every authority. If the depositions of these two priests had influenced Monsignor in Gemma's favour, some experiments made by a priest altogether opposed to her turned him in the other direction, and so he could come to no decision.

The Gianninis' confidence in Gemma was soon restored. Chevalier Matthew indeed deposed: 'In the ecstasy that followed, we did not think of repeating the test made by the doctor; seeing also the other wounds, we were convinced that they were really the work of God, and we unhesitatingly accepted Gemma's explanation of the failure of the doctor's test.'

What was the result of what happened on that September 8? Not what Monsignor Volpi had expected, nor what the doctor expected. But one result was an increase of sorrow and humiliation for Gemma. However, this is what usually accompanies extraordinary gifts from God.

At Lourdes after the sixth apparition, Jacomet, the Chief of Police, determined to put an end to what he called a profit-making comedy. He so intimidated Bernadette's father, that he forbade his daughter to go near the Grotto. A mysterious impulse, however, led her there the following evening. But the vision did not appear. The freethinkers boasted of their victory. 'The Lady is afraid of the Police,' they said. 'So soon as shrewd old Jacomet took a hand in the matter, she decided to get away from the Rock and change her abode.'

So also in Gemma's case, it seemed that when recourse was had to science, the miracle ceased. But science cannot pretend to explain the supernatural; it can only ascertain facts. But to ascertain the facts in Gemma's case a doctor

was not necessary. All that was needed was two good eyes. All that science could infer from an examination of phenomena that did not remain constant but was reproduced at irregular intervals was that, at the time of inspection, certain manifestations were not present - just that and no more.

Nevertheless, we must admire the designs of Divine Providence in all that happened, for to hide from profane eyes the gifts He had bestowed upon Gemma He deigned to work miracles. Notwithstanding the failure of the test there were things that spoke loud in her favour, her serenity, her charity, her calm peace of soul. The perplexity of Monsignor still remained, but as had been revealed to Gemma. God would convince him of the truth.

HER SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR - 'THAT PRIEST WILL BE YOUR DIRECTOR'

In the letters quoted at length in the preceding chapter, Gemma declares that she had understood from Jesus that her confessor's mind would be set at rest concerning the mysterious things that happened to her, by means of a priest whom she calls the Father. But who exactly was this priest? She already knew that her director would be a Passionist. This she had understood clearly during the mission in the Cathedral at Lucca. 'You will be a daughter of My Passion and a favorite daughter. One of these children of Mine will be a father to you.' These words, which shaped the course of her life henceforward, she had heard deep down in her heart, and she had no doubt about them. They came from Jesus. 'Jesus,' she wrote, 'made Himself felt very strongly within me.'

During the course of this narrative we have met several Passionists, but none of these was to be the spiritual director

of. this privileged soul. Each had his appointed mission in favour of the servant of God, but when this was accomplished each withdrew, rejoicing that such a task had been assigned to him.

Monsignor Volpi still hesitated, and Gemma felt herself alone. But one day, as we have seen, he made his intentions clear to her. If Jesus would not enlighten him he would have to consider that all these mysterious things were her own imaginings. What was she to do? She had recourse to prayer.

'I did not lose time,' she wrote in her Autobiography, 'and that same day I made a special prayer to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. I felt internally recollected and suddenly I was rapt out of my senses. I found I was before Jesus, but He was not alone. Near Him there was a man with white hair, somewhat stout, and from his habit I knew that he was a Passionist priest, and he was praying very earnestly with hands joined. I looked at him, and Jesus said these words to me: "Daughter, do you know him?" I answered, "no", as was true. "That priest," He continued, "will be your director, and it is he who will recognize in you, a miserable creature, the work of My infinite Mercy."'

In the first letter she wrote to her new spiritual director, she told him of his appointment to that office:

'A little while back a thought struck me to ask Jesus to let me see you. He did not satisfy me immediately, but after a few days, it seemed to me that while I was praying I saw a Passionist who also was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, and Jesus said to me: "See who Father Germanus is?" I looked at him, and do you know how I saw him? He was somewhat heavily built, and was on his knees, very steady, with hands joined, and it seemed to me that his hair was more white than black.'

This description corresponded exactly with that of a man whose name she had heard in ecstasy, Father Germanus of Saint Stanislaus. At that time she did not know him. Perhaps she had seen his name on the title page of the Life of Saint Gabriel she had read. Besides, according to what Father Germanus said afterwards, it seems that he was not yet known to Monsignor Volpi.

Gemma certainly spoke of the matter to Monsignor, for without his consent she would never enter into relations with anybody. This wise prelate, being far from decided in his mind about Gemma, had divided his responsibility, and had sent his holy penitent, now to one confessor, now to another, in the hope of finding help in the direction of this soul that was so dear to him. He did this because his many occupations, and above all his humility, had made him consider that the burden of direction was too heavy for him.

When therefore he heard from Gemma of Father Germanus, he should not have found it difficult to secure information about him, either from the Gianninis or from the Passionists themselves, with one of whom he had already conferred several times. At all events Monsignor agreed in the end to get into touch with Father Germanus, and allowed Gemma to write to him.

Her first letter, a long one consisting of twelve pages, dated 29 January 1900, was written with that sincerity and candor which characterized everything she did. She mentions the permission she had received, her cure through the intercession of Saint Gabriel, her vocation, and the future foundation of the Passionist Nuns in Lucca. This letter reached Father Germanus together with another from Cecilia Giannini in which she asked him to give Gemma's letter every consideration. A few days later he received another letter from Gemma in which she said candidly that Jesus had

spoken to her: 'My daughter, write to the Father,' this was the message she received, 'and tell him that your confessor is willing to get into touch with him. Let him do so, because this is My desire. This is My will that your confessor refer everything to the Father henceforward.'

Monsignor Volpi, being in Rome about this time, endeavored to meet Father Germanus, but failed. He therefore wrote to him. Cecilia Giannini was more fortunate, and was able to meet him in Rome and speak to him about Gemma.

At all events the letters of Father Germanus did not at first evince much enthusiasm for Gemma, nor did they reassure Monsignor Volpi. 'On principle, and because of a long experience in the ministry, I find it difficult to give credence to extraordinary things in women,' Father Germanus declared in the Processes, and therefore he advised Monsignor to pay no attention to them and to make his penitent follow the common path. Later on he suggested to him that he should forbid her formally to watch at night, or to practise austerities or to give herself up to contemplative thoughts, and that he should command her to avoid everything out of the ordinary and to occupy herself assiduously in suitable but distracting work. Father Germanus even went so far in his opposition to Gemma as to advise Monsignor to exorcise his penitent.

Realizing that this correspondence was achieving no result, Monsignor Volpi asked the Father Provincial to send Father Germanus to Lucca in order to examine Gemma. In the beginning of September Father Germanus arrived at the Gianninis'. It is easy to see that his sentiments in regard to Gemma were not unlike those which animated the doctor who made his famous experiment a year before. Nevertheless as God had won over Father Peter Paul to

Gemma's cause, so also in that same place He would win over Father Germanus.

As soon as she saw him Gemma recognized him and rejoiced, for she immediately recognized him as the one whom she had seen in ecstasy. On his side Father Germanus experienced a sentiment of veneration towards her which he could not explain. They retired to pray before the big family Crucifix, and they both wept, but nothing further happened then. That evening during supper - it was a Thursday - Gemma, feeling the ecstasy coming on, got up from table and retired to her room. In a little while she was in ecstasy.

STRUGGLING WITH DIVINE JUSTICE

Here we think it best to give Father Germanus's account of what happened by quoting from his biography of Gemma:

'Her adopted mother [Cecilia Giannini] came to call me. I followed her and found the maiden in ecstasy. The subject of the ecstasy was the conversion of a sinner, and the form was a struggle between her and the Divine Justice to obtain this conversion. I confess that I never beheld anything more affecting. Gemma was sitting on her bed with her eyes, face and all her person turned towards a part of the room where Our Lord appeared to her. She was not agitated but earnest and resolute like one in a struggle, who is determined to win at all costs. She began by saying: "As You art here, Jesus, I renew my supplications for my sinner. He is Thy child and my brother; save him, Jesus"; and she named him. He was a stranger whom she had known in Lucca, and moved by spiritual impulse she had already warned him a number of times by word of mouth and by letter to listen to the dictates of his conscience and not be contented with the mere reputation of being a good Christian. Jesus, seeming disposed to deal as a just Judge with this man, remained

unmoved by her entreaties. But Gemma was not deterred by these refusals and continued: "Why today do You not grant my request? For one soul only You have done so much! Why then will You not save this one? Save him, O Jesus, save him! Be good, Jesus. Do not say that to me. In Thy mouth, You who art Mercy itself, that word, 'abandon,' sounds badly; You must not say it. You have not measured the blood You have shed for sinners, and now do You wish to measure the enormity of our sins? Will You not give in? To whom then shall I turn? You have shed Thy Blood for him as well as for me. Will You save me and not him? I will not rise from here until You save him; promise me that You will save him. I offer myself victim for all, but particularly for him. I promise not to refuse Thee anything. Will You not grant my request? Remember, O Jesus, a soul is at stake! A soul, Jesus, that cost Thee so much. He will become good and will not fall again."

'In answer to all her pleading the Saviour put forward the claims of Divine Justice. She, however, grew still more earnest, and replied: "I am not seeking Thy justice; I am imploring Thy Mercy. My Jesus, go and find this poor sinner; make him repent." And here to prove to Gemma what reason He had for remaining firm, Our Lord began to show her one by one, with the most minute circumstances of time and place, the evil deeds of that sinner, adding that he had filled up their measure. The poor girl showed her dismay; she let her hands fall down and sighed deeply, as if she had lost hope of succeeding. But recovering quickly from the shock, she returned to the attack. "I know, O Jesus," she said, "I know it; that he has offended Thee thus grievously; but I have done worse and yet You have shown me Mercy. What immense Charity, O Jesus, have You not lavished upon me! Treat my sinner, I implore of Thee, with those delicacies of infinite Love with which You have treated me. Remember, O Jesus, that I want him to be saved. Triumph, triumph! I ask this of Thee; oh, do not refuse me."

In spite of all these efforts, Our Lord remained inflexible, and Gemma, again becoming downhearted and discouraged, remained silent as if she had abandoned the struggle. Then of a sudden another motive flashed to her mind, a motive that seemed invincible against all resistance. Again becoming all animated she spoke thus: "Well, I am a sinner; You Thyself have told me so; that worse than me You couldst not find. Yes, I confess it, I am unworthy that You should listen to me; yet I present to Thee another advocate for my sinner; it is Thine own Mother who asks Thee to forgive him. Canst You say 'no' to Thy Mother? Surely You canst not say 'no' to her. Answer me now, O Jesus; say that You have saved my sinner." The victory was gained, the whole scene changed its aspect, the merciful Savior had granted the grace, and Gemma, with a look of indescribable joy, exclaimed: "He is saved, he is saved! Jesus, You have conquered; triumph always thus." Then she came out of her ecstasy.'

Gemma had indeed prayed earnestly for her sinner! But her charity was to have its reward, not only in the triumph of Divine Mercy, but also by the changing of Father Germanus's mind in her favour.

When the ecstasy was over and Father Germanus, a prey to the deepest emotion, retired to his room, there was a knock at his door. 'Father, a gentleman has called and wishes to see you.' A man entered and weeping threw himself at the priest's feet. 'Father, hear my confession.' He was Gemma's sinner. Father Germanus heard his confession, the man accusing himself of all the sins that were mentioned in the ecstasy, except one which he had forgotten and which Father Germanus recalled to his mind, telling him at the same time what had happened. The man willingly gave Father Germanus permission to publish these wonders of the Lord, and after embracing one another they parted. 'The

devil is able to drag sinners to perdition,' said Father Germanus in concluding his account of these incidents, 'but not to convert them.' And with these words he declared himself conquered.

HER NEW DIRECTOR AT WORK

But Father Germanus was not so completely conquered that he could rest satisfied with mere wonder and approval. He had come to make an examination, and he determined to do it thoroughly. 'I began my studies with great earnestness,' he said, 'in order to make certain of Gemma's spirit. These studies lasted nearly three years without interruption. Guided by ascetical and mystical Theology and by modern physiological science I put her through a long trial so as to be able to say in the end that I had not neglected any means of ascertaining the truth, and I can say that none of my tests failed. The Bishop, her confessor, in his turn, was satisfied; he approved of all that I had done, and expressed his desire that I should take up the direction of Gemma.'

As the first words of Jesus to Gemma were verified, so also these other words would be verified: 'It is he who will recognize in you, a miserable creature, the work of My infinite Mercy.' Father Germanus did indeed recognize the work of God, and on 6 September 1900, he wrote to Monsignor these precise words: 'Gemma is a true gem of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; there is not the slightest possible doubt about it. I do not know anything about the past, but today she is pure gold.' And on 4 March 1901, he wrote:

'With regard to hysteria, inasmuch as Jesus is so good and lovable, do not think of it, for that would be to become absurd. No, no, there is not a trace of it in her. Modern medical men, even Catholic medical men, are as it were set in their ideas on this point. If you desire to judge exactly

concerning the external facts connected with Gemma, you must not take one or two separately, but all of them together, and then you will find that there is a marvelous agreement between them, binding them into a perfect uniformity. On the other hand, hysteria has for substantial form, fickleness, inconstancy, light-headedness, futility, eccentricity, irresoluteness, etc., because hysteria is a symptom of insanity; and whoever is mentally unbalanced, is never consistent.'

Here are some further extracts from Father Germanus's letters to Monsignor Volpi, and it is clear from them that from September, 1900, Father Germanus was indeed Gemma's spiritual director.

'Your Excellency knows and understands better than I do, the present state of this maiden who has been under your care for so long. It seems to me that I am rash in interfering in the matter at all. But I shall take the liberty of saying that, as things stand at present, it would be better to proceed with greater ease and quietness, avoiding everything that could in any way impede or restrict the operation of her spirit. God will see to the rest. You must, indeed, demand of her absolute obedience and detachment, but when it is clear that she has done her duty, it is better to leave her to the guidance of the Spirit of God.'

In another letter he wrote:

'God has confided this soul to you and not to others. Do not think of having recourse to doctors, for, though you think that by doing so you will please Jesus, the consequences, as I am able to see them by the light which God gives me, will be most harmful to the spirit of Gemma and to your Excellency. God is working miracles to keep these things hidden. In the midst of a numerous family, these marvels are

occurring unnoticed, and shall we broadcast them? Besides, why make these things known? That which is taking place in Gemma, is going on unknown to outsiders; why not leave them hidden as they are? But you say you are doubtful. Can it be possible that you are still doubtful? If so, then go and see with your own eyes. The best way to come to a decision about Gemma is to observe her interior spiritual life. I am not putting the external facts aside, but what will strike everyone is her simplicity, her profound humility, her detachment, her union with God and her trust in Him, her evenness of temperament, her desire of suffering, her forgetfulness of self and her childlike candor in the midst of such extraordinary things.'

'My dear Monsignor, Gemma at present requires just a little direction. Too much preoccupation about, too much worry over her, is out of place. What is wanted is calm, tranquil direction. I believe this is the principle that should guide us: Gemma should be hidden from Gemma, the direction of her spirit should be simple, without any coercion, in such a way that she may never perceive that anyone in the world is interested in her or her gifts.'

It was with the same assurance that he wrote to Gemma's adopted mother:

'With regard to this dear soul, be easy in your mind; it is now proved that what is happening is the work of God, and He will complete this work in spite of ignorance and all the passions of men and all the rage of the demons. On our part we ought to be patient in bearing contradictions, and prudent in avoiding them when that is possible. In the meantime you can rejoice that God has chosen you to be the guardian of a soul so dear to Him. He will reward you generously.'

Thus this man fulfilled his mission, this man who had been chosen by God to help Gemma along the road to perfection; and we say mission advisedly, because it was such indeed. Gemma herself made this clear in a letter she wrote to Father Germanus in May, 1901.

'I hasten to give you a message from Jesus. As far as I can see, it is very important, and I hope that you will take it to heart. They are certain words that I cannot understand at all. Nay, even this morning when I asked Jesus to explain them a little to me, He answered: "Let it be your sole care to communicate this message as soon as possible. Do not enquire further." These are the words: "Tell the Father that it is now quite some time since I placed an important work in his hands, in order that he may do his best to bring the work to completion. What this important task, this great work is, he already knows, and he should devote himself wholeheartedly to it. I put everything in his hands. Let him ask for an explanation after Communion, and I shall give it to him.'"

The work of which there is question was none other than the sanctification of Gemma's soul. Father Germanus undertook this work with great earnestness and carried it to a happy conclusion. In his biography of Gemma he wrote:

'Pleasant indeed was the task of guiding this favored soul, so detached in mind and heart from everything earthly, and particularly from herself. She was humble, docile, lovable, ready for every sacrifice, full of faith and love of 'God, and at the same time so natural that you would scarcely have distinguished her from any ordinary young girl. I must not stop here to describe all the rare qualities of my spiritual child. I shall say only this, that to have dealings with her, to labour in helping her to advance in perfection, and to correspond with the impulses of Divine grace, caused me no

weariness, but rather intense satisfaction. One could have spoken to her for many hours on heavenly things, oblivious of the passage of time. She spoke little, even to her director, and seemed to find a difficulty in answering the questions I put to her. Nevertheless, what she said was so much to the point, so sensible, so full of unction that it was a pleasure to listen to her.'

Naturally, considering the distance that separated Gemma from Father Germanus, the greater part of this direction was accomplished by letter. But this was another admirable design of Divine Providence, for these letters, at least a number of them, were published together with extracts from her ecstasies 'in one volume, and constitute what the Civilita Cattolica called 'a treasure of heavenly wisdom - a marvelous and captivating volume, full of solid doctrine, the most efficacious asceticism, and the highest mysticism.'

Gemma was most grateful not only to God for having given her such a helper, but also to Father Germanus himself. She was most devoted to him, treating him with the greatest reverence and respect, and with the ingenuousness of a child called him Babbo, although he, in pursuance of his principle to keep Gemma hidden from Gemma, treated her with just ordinary courtesy. 'Father Germanus told me several times,' said Cecilia Giannini, 'that Gemma had gone to Heaven with her baptismal innocence unsullied. But while she was alive, although he had a great esteem for her, he never let it be seen; on the contrary, he used to scold her.' And Gemma herself wrote to him:

'Infinite thanks for all the care you have taken and will take of my poor soul. I hope that by now you have come to understand me well and that you will be able to do me some good. Pray to Jesus for me, that He may enlighten you about me and then convert me. Will you ever succeed in

converting me? I find it hard to weep at any time, and when your last letter made me think of this, I wept, and I always weep when I think of it. Live, Jesus! If you succeed in saving my soul for me, you will see what I shall do for you in return - what I shall do for you when I go to Heaven. I shall pull you in after me at all costs.'

In a note to this letter in *Lettere ed estasi*, Father Germanus writes: 'In this hope I live. In the midst of the labors of this present life, these words are always a consolation to me.'

On the other hand, Gemma had a great esteem for Father Germanus. According to a witness in the Processes, she used to say that her extraordinary confessor was a saint. Now that she has been declared Blessed these words of hers assume a new importance, and make one think more highly of him who was chosen by God to guide this privileged soul. He died on 11 December 1909, at fifty-nine years of age, leaving behind him a reputation for learning - his many published works provide ample proof of his learning - and an even greater reputation for virtue, a fact which made him beloved not only by his religious brethren but by all who came into contact with him. Before his death he had the great consolation of giving evidence about his spiritual child at the Ordinary Processes held at Lucca, and of seeing his Life of Gemma Galgani received everywhere with enthusiasm, and reach a third edition in two years.

'Against this direction,' Sister Gesualda well remarks, 'Hell itself was let loose, and all the poisonous influence of men was hurled, but what does it matter? From all eternity God has chosen a guide for each soul, and the Will of God will triumph over every obstacle. Father Germanus was the guide chosen by God for Gemma, and in spite of men and devils, such he remained.'

HER CANDOUR OF SOUL - GEMMA OF LUCCA AND THERESE OF LISIEUX

Perhaps more than one reader, even before reaching this point in the story of Blessed Gemma, will have asked himself why God should have bestowed His favors upon this humble and confiding soul, in such a manner and in such profusion, that, to borrow the language of Father Schryvers, it would seem as if He feared that there would not be sufficient time to complete here below the work of His love.'"

God is free to give His gifts to whomsoever He desires, to one more and to another less, and no one has the right to demand the reason of His actions, because He is doing no wrong to anyone. Nevertheless, if we search for a reason for this preference we shall find it in these beautiful words of Saint Bernard: *Cum sit candor, delectatur candidis* that being candor itself, He takes His delight in souls possessing this virtue, and according to the same holy Doctor, candor of soul means a certain simplicity embracing all the virtues, and resulting from childlike faith, firm hope, innocence of life, humility, and a pure and perfect love.

Simplicity was the most characteristic virtue of the humble servant of God. It was the spirit, the soul of her every thought, word and action. Like her great contemporary, Saint Therese of Lisieux, she understood marvelously well the Gospel warning: 'Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.' The Promoter General of the Faith, during the discussion on the heroic nature of her virtues, recognized this resemblance with Saint Therese. 'What awakens admiration in the life of Gemma,' he said, 'is (among other things) her truly childlike ingenuousness, similar to that which was seen to shine forth so brightly in Saint Therese of the Child Jesus.' And the Carmelite, Sister Gesualda, has shown that the way of

Therese of Lisieux and the way of Gemma of Lucca are in substance the same - a way of confidence and of loving abandonment. While Saint Therese fulfils her mission of pointing out to souls the 'little way,' Gemma shows us that the 'little way' is not incompatible with the most extraordinary favors which God sometimes bestows upon the Saints. Gemma is a child resting in the arms of God, and whilst she lies abandoned upon His Heart in a sweet and peaceful sleep of love He showers His gifts upon her, Gemma's simplicity appeared in all she did, enhancing all her actions, and making her lovable and dear. She was simple in thought, in her manner of speaking, in her manner of acting .. According to Father Germanus this beautiful quality accompanied her also to the sublime heights of mysticism. She set out upon this journey, a child in spirit as a child in age, and she never changed. She treated with the majesty of God in a childlike way, listened to His ineffable secrets, tasted His sweetness. The ease, the naturalness, the spontaneity with which she acted in the midst of the most extraordinary phenomena, constitutes one of the best proofs of the soundness of her spirit. By choosing here and there from her writings and from the Processes, we shall be able to convey some idea of her simplicity, and also some idea of the other virtues which, according to Saint Bernard, proceed from this simplicity, and the perfume of which so delights the Spouse of souls: 'candore et odore virtutum delectatur.'

All witnesses spoke of this simplicity in the servant of God. Monsignor Volpi said:

'Her ingenuousness and simplicity were extraordinary, so much so that I hold she was absolutely incapable of pretending or deceiving, and that if this had not been the case, it would have been easy, considering the circumstances of place and dwelling, to discover any deception. I never noticed in her the least artificiality, and

she performed everything so simply and naturally as to manifest all the candor of her soul; and I am convinced that the Servant of God was truly an elect soul and maintained a special, intimate and constant union with God. I never noticed in her anything superstitious or exaggerated in the practice of religion, or in the exercise of piety, nor any ostentation or levity of mind. On the contrary she was very simple, although her demeanor was always devout and recollected.'

Brother Famiano deposed: 'She was like a child. Once she even asked me to accompany her to the mission at S. Concordia, and when I remarked that being a religious it was not the proper thing for me to do, she answered: "a wretched human respect!"' And because, as we have said, she thought that the extraordinary phenomena that happened to her were common to all souls who had consecrated themselves to God, she said one day to the same Brother Famiano that she had seen the Blessed Virgin of Sorrows, and asked him whether he had seen her also. It was the same simplicity which made her, during her stay with the 'Mantellate' Nuns, speak of her soul and of the things which happened to her to any religious she met. When, however, the Mother Superior told Monsignor of this, he commanded Gemma to mention these things to no one except the Mother Superior, and Gemma as usual obeyed. This ingenuous trust in others recalls the question she once asked Sister Julia Sestini, at the time when the Stigmata and the other sorrows of the Passion began. 'She asked me,' said Sister Julia Sestini, 'whether spouses of Jesus could have other signs of the Passion besides the wound in the heart.'

Her dear friend, Palmira Valentini, fully agrees with Brother Famiano and says: 'She was always so simple that she appeared to be a child.' And Signora Carola Puccinelli

declared: 'I noticed in this child all the virtues, and simplicity especially.'

This virtue, as we have shown, accompanied her always, even in her supernatural manifestations. When the force of the Divine love within her caused two ribs over her heart to bulge out somewhat, this is how she explained the matter to Aunt Cecilia: 'I don't know just what to make of it, but here in this spot a bone has come out.'

'In speaking,' Mother Gemma Giannini declared, 'she never pretended to know and understand spiritual things better than others.' And this is exactly what Cecilia Giannini deposed: 'She never played the teacher; she spoke on edifying subjects, but without any display of knowledge or ostentation.'

We have mentioned her self-possession, and the absence in her of artificiality. 'When the ecstasy ceased,' says Father Germanus, 'she got up as if nothing had happened, washed her hands of the blood-stains - the blood had flowed copiously pulled down her sleeves so as to cover the large scars, and then believing that no one had noticed her, soon began to talk calmly to members of the household.'

But Gemma's ingenuousness nowhere shines so marvelously as in her writings. She had been to confession, and her confessor had counselled her to live as if she were dead, and this is how she told Father Germanus about it:

'From four o'clock today I am dead, Father. My confessor has told me that I must be dead. And do you know why? I was lamenting, now about one thing, now about another. My confessor listened to me for a little while, and then the only obedience he gave me was this: "You ought to live as if you

were dead." I must speak no more, nor manifest my desires; I am dead, Father.'

A Roman lady, a friend of hers, had asked her to pray to Saint Rita of Cascia and Saint Frances of Rome for her. This was her answer:

'In that letter which you sent to me a few days ago, you asked me to pray for you to Saint Rita of Cascia and to Saint Frances of Rome, but how can I do that when I do not even know them? Do you know what I thought of doing? I have entrusted the matter to Confrater Gabriel by means of a letter addressed to him which I gave to my Guardian Angel, but an answer has not come back yet. I am expecting an answer every day, and when it comes, if I am allowed I shall write to you again immediately.'

The same lady was to pay a visit to the Tomb of Saint Gabriel, and Gemma, hearing of it, wrote thus to her:

'I should like to send a message to Venerable Gabriel. Will you, my sister, carry it to him for me? Say this to him: "Gemma wants you to pray to Jesus very earnestly for her, so that she will be satisfied with everything that happens simply because He wills it to happen. If He wills things to be remedied, let Him remedy them. If He does not, she will then know that He had so ordered things." Put thus, it suffices. Jesus will understand what I mean. Much more so, if our dear Gabriel speaks to Him about it. When you speak to him use the polite "voi" because the Father does not wish the more familiar "tu" to be used.'

Father Germanus had indeed told her to use 'voi' in her conversations with the Angels and Saints.

Though at times Father Germanus received letters from her which were taxed because there were no stamps on them,

he could not be displeased because they were accompanied by such childlike and ingenuous phrases as these: 'I could write all this because I am alone in the house today. As I have no money, I am putting this letter in the box without a stamp. My dear Father, you will pay for it, won't you? Do not be displeased, please, I am very, very poor.'

Later on in this chapter we shall treat of the rare mortification of Gemma; but we wish to mention here the pleasing simplicity with which she asked her spiritual director for permission to beg of Jesus the grace of being deprived of all sense of taste:

'It is some time since I began to think that Jesus was inspiring me to ask of Him a certain grace. I shall do what you say; but I believe you will see that there will be no harm in permitting me to make the request. I feel sure that you will have many objections to put forward; such as, that I have grown thin, that it is not necessary; but they have no weight. Listen; do you agree that I ask Jesus to grant me the grace never again to experience any taste in any food? Father, this grace is necessary for me. I hope Jesus will tell you to grant it to me. However it be I shall be satisfied.'

Her Guardian Angel asked her for a proof of her love for Jesus, and this is how she sought from Father Germanus an explanation of what this meant: 'Yesterday at the end of my meditation, I was making as usual resolutions to love Jesus with all my heart. "Well then," said my Angel, "we shall soon see whether you will prove your resolutions." I told this to my confessor, but even he does not know to what he referred. Please tell me if you know.'

And here is another example of her pleasing simplicity in speaking of sublime things. 'On Friday my confessor asked me some questions about the mystery of the most Holy

Trinity. I was very much confused. But how well Jesus knew how to whisper in my ear! We were lost in wonder, humiliating ourselves before the great majesty of God.'

The reasons she gives for the love God bestows upon her make even more manifest her inimitable ingenuousness. She speaks as an orphan child might speak. 'He loves me; He loves me very much. He loves me because I have neither father nor mother; He loves me because I am a poor creature, and, finally, He loves me because I am so wicked, and in His sight the wicked are more welcome than the good.' The reader will easily understand in what sense these last words must be taken.

PREY TO FEARS

But this ingenuous child reposing at peace in the arms of her heavenly Father was yet a prey to fear. She was afraid of deceiving or of being deceived. Not that she feared she had given occasion for such deception. She feared because others were afraid. 'I doubt because the others doubt,' she said in an ecstasy to Jesus. 'If it be really You, Jesus, do please make Thyself clearly known. We cannot go on this way, neither I nor the confessor.'

To find peace of mind she opened up her difficulties to her director. We shall choose a few extracts here and there. 'Father, I am afraid, very much afraid of losing my soul, because yesterday I heard a priest who came to see the mother relate that there was a nun who had marks in her hands, her feet, her head and heart, and who used to go into ecstasy, and that it was all a deception. Can it be, Father, that I am a deceiver? If I am a deceiver I shall go to Hell. I should like you to explain to me what a deceiver is, because I do not want to deceive anyone.' And when he was paying a visit to the Tomb of Saint Gabriel, she wrote to him: 'Act like

this: Go to his tomb, to his body, and order him thus through obedience: "Tell me what I am to do about Gemma?" And then when you come back you will write and tell me what he said, won't you?' On another occasion in similar circumstances, she wrote: 'The first thing you ought to do, Father, is to place in his hands (Saint Gabriel's) the important affair of my salvation; ask him whether I have any hope of being saved, and not. to allow me to be deceived, nor allow my director to be deceived in guiding me in the present manner.'

These fears sometimes caused her extreme torment. She wrote:

'This morning I was awake very early. Suddenly a multitude of thoughts such as these began to assail me: "And if I was deceived?if all the things that happen to me would but lead me to ruin - if my director was deceived?" And this struggle lasted until, do you know what hour, Father? Until five o'clock. I do not know where Jesus was; He did not speak even half a word to me. In the end He showed a little compassion, and withdrawing my senses somewhat made me hear these words: "My daughter, do not fear. It is I who am working in you. I shall never abandon you; live in peace of mind." Father, ask Jesus whether it was He or another who spoke these words.'

Dear Gemma, your very fears constitute the best argument for the sincerity of your spirit and the authenticity of your virtues!

DIVINE FAMILIARITY

Here will be quoted in part at least some of the colloquies which Gemma held with Jesus while she was in ecstasy, in

order to show with what childlike simplicity she associated with Him:

'Stay and listen, Jesus. Now I know that it is really You. If it had been my imagination I should not have wanted it any longer; I should want to die. Listen, You have always told me that You wouldst give me any grace whatever, and I have told Thee that I want this grace. Yes, and after this grace I want many other graces. If You grant me this one, You will also grant me the others. Now listen, if You do not grant me what I now ask I will no longer answer when You call me. Art You inclined to call me! If it is You, then do me this favour, will You not? Otherwise, when You call me, I shall not pay attention. I'll be deaf to the calling. If it be You, Jesus, You will not lie; but if it is You, then grant me what I ask. I believe that it is You, but do You not know that there are others who do not think so? I am not upset about it, You know. I am better so. They do not believe that it is You; they think that I am mad. But I am not a bit mad, isn't this so, Jesus? Are things to remain in this way? See to it that they don't torment me any more. But, O Jesus, it is for sufferings only that I should ask. However, grant me this favour, and then You will see how I shall want to please Thee.'

Perhaps someone will say that such familiarity is excessive. But with the author of the Imitation of Christ, we can call this familiarity between Jesus and the soul inebriated with His love, by no other name than sublime, marvelous, 'familiarities stupenda nimis.'

FRUITS OF SIMPLICITY

The first-fruit of this simplicity was a spirit of obedience truly heroic. We have quoted incidents here and there which showed clearly how Gemma exercised this virtue. We shall now give a few more instances, and by quoting her own

words allow her to reveal with inimitable candor her own beautiful heart.

As formerly in her own home, so now in the Giannini household, always and everywhere, she allowed herself to be guided by obedience, just as if she was an automaton. 'She was very simple,' deposed Monsignor Volpi, 'and never discussed what she was told to do, or the advice that was given to her.' And the obedience of this simple soul was so pleasing to God, that He desired it be preserved even during the supernatural manifestations. A mental command only, even a mental desire of her director, of her confessor, of her adopted mother, was enough to recall her from ecstasy. When she was in bed at the voice of obedience she closed her eyes and went to sleep, and then at the voice of obedience awakened again.

From certain inner emotions she sometimes knew the good or the bad state of the people who were near her. Both her confessor and her director told her not to pay attention to these feelings. She wrote to Father Germanus: 'With regard to the matter I wrote to you about, that is, my divining the state of people around me, do not mention it to me again; I no longer think about it. My heart continues to be glad or to be sorrowful, but I pay no attention to it now, and when it happens, I try to distract myself.' Sometimes she knew when letters from Father Germanus were to arrive, or when other persons - as Monsignor Tei, Bishop of Pesaro, deposed - were to come to the house. Father Germanus took occasion from this to mortify her, and she replied: 'I shall make sure never again to do what I have done nor to say what I have said.' And in another letter: 'I have overcome myself. This morning early, before Holy Communion, I had an inspiration, and I knew that one of your letters was to come this morning. I suffered a little from my desire to speak about it, but I

repressed myself and remained silent. That is good, is it not?'

The familiarity shown in her relations with Heaven appeared excessive to Father Germanus, and he instructed her to use 'voi' instead of 'tu' in her talks with Jesus and the Angels and Saints. She obeyed, but the habit she had acquired and this interference with her natural simplicity betrayed her, so that she would humble and correct herself even in her ecstasies. Nevertheless, she could write to her director: 'To the Angels I no longer say "tu"; always "voi" from today.' Gemma, however, experienced great difficulty in carrying out this direction, and she complained of it to Jesus, who was pleased to free her from this embarrassment. She wrote to Father Germanus:

'Father, please listen. Babbo, you are no longer in agreement with Jesus even. Several times you have told me that I must not say "tu" to Jesus, and that I was not to treat Him so confidentially. But yesterday morning Jesus said to me: "Look, my child, when I show Myself somewhat cold with people, it is because they have not all that confidence in Me that I desire. Whoever omits to treat Jesus with confidence, wrongs His Goodness which has been shown to us so many times and in so many different ways." Besides, it seems to me, Father, that when we have great confidence in Jesus, we are, as it were, doing Him a sweet violence that will compel Him to pour out His graces upon us. Is this true?'

Father Germanus declared himself conquered by these arguments, and allowed her to express herself as her heart suggested when speaking with Jesus, the Blessed Virgin and the Angels and Saints.

On another occasion Father Germanus told her that she was not to put so much trust in the frequency of the visits of her

Guardian Angel. This is how she wrote of one of these visits:

'I have obeyed, you know, with the Angel You know it already, don't you, that for two days I had short visits from my dear Angel. Oh, Father, what was I to do? He came unexpectedly. On seeing him I was rather troubled; I began to be a bit afraid and said: "If You art sent by God, come, I will receive thee; if You art sent by the Devil, I will spit in thy face." Then he smiled and adored the Majesty of God, afterwards making a salutation to the most Holy Trinity. Father, help me always, I wish to obey; I dread lest through my fault Jesus should have to take away His grace from me.'

With reference to another visit from her Angel she wrote again to Father Germanus:

'Do you know, Father, that on Friday evening, that holy Angel made me uneasy. I did not want him at all, and he wished to say so many things to me. Hardly had he arrived when he said: "God bless thee, O soul confided to my care." Imagine, Father! I answered him in this way: "O holy Angel, please listen. Do not soil your hands with me; go away; go to another soul that knows how to make use of the gifts of God. I do not know how to do so." In short, I made him understand. But he replied: "Of what art You afraid?" "Of disobeying," I answered. He then said: "That will not be the case when your Father sends me." Then I allowed him to speak, but I did not make much of him.'

The Angel, however, was not offended at her disregarding him, because her attitude was inspired by her candor of soul. The Angel took occasion from it to inculcate increased devotion to the exercise of obedience: 'O child, what a different world it would be if everyone was obedient. Tell me, who was the first to be obedient? Thy Mom. Oh, how more perfect than thy obedience was the obedience of Jesus! Do

You desire help to practise obedience perfectly and with merit? Be obedient always out of love for Jesus.'

Blessed Gemma did indeed understand the value of obedience, and gathered rich fruits of salvation from it. In the denial of her own will - a denial necessarily implied in the practice of obedience she found all her happiness. She wrote to her director: 'What consolation I experience in being always under obedience!' She obeyed as if she had been born to obey, although her natural disposition was to command and dominate others. But she succeeded in conquering nature, and made virtue triumph in her. 'Her obedience was indeed perfect,' it was stated in the Processes, 'without questioning or excuses, prompt and joyful. It reached such a perfection that she suffered torture of body and mind, rather than be wanting in this virtue.'

Here is one more incident which shows Gemma's perfect obedience.

The Gianninis had had a picture of Gemma painted representing her at prayer. After a few days this picture disappeared. A thousand causes were assigned by the family for its disappearance. It was thought that the Devil had taken it because of his hatred of the holy girl. Although she was not even remotely suspected, it was indeed Gemma herself who was to blame. Father Andreuccetti knew of this, having heard it from Gemma herself. The reader will easily guess the reason why she had hidden the picture, but the priest explained that her benefactors had had it painted only as a memorial of her, and that by hiding it she would be the cause of their suspicions and the false conclusions at which they would arrive, and advised her to return it to its place. Clearly, it was hard for her to obey this priest, but she conquered herself and put the picture back where she found it.

In a letter to Father Germanus, who no doubt had been told of the disappearance of the picture, and who was in a better position than anyone to divine her motive, she confessed what she had done:

'I was questioned (Father, Jesus helped me not to tell a lie), I was questioned in this way: "Gemma," they said, "you did not take it, did you?" "What is the use of your worrying about it?" I answered. "Leave it where it is. What do you want to do with it? Jesus does things well. If you would obtain any good for your souls from that picture, certainly He would have left it where it was, but with regard to an ugly scandalous figure, and you all know well what she has been, it is better that when the body is dead and gone, all be forgotten." And after she had obeyed she wrote again: 'The famous picture that disappeared for some days, is back in its place.'

'THE TALLEST AND MOST MAJESTIC TREE IS HOLY HUMILITY'

Humility is the foundation of all sanctity. To attempt to build the edifice of Christian perfection without first providing this foundation, is absurd. Gemma's humility went hand in hand with her simplicity. In order to give at least a general idea of how she practiced this virtue, we cannot do less than quote a deposition made by Mother Gemma Giannini:

'I can say that humility was the virtue most esteemed by the Servant of God, because endowed as she was with so many gifts, enlightened by so many supernatural manifestations, admired and loved by all, only a touch of pride was necessary to destroy the whole spiritual edifice. Nevertheless as if she knew nothing of that, she remained always at her post, the most humble post, calm and at peace, and indifferent to all things. She did not perceive

whether people liked her or not whether they paid attention to her or neglected her. She was alike indifferent to praise and blame. She knew the truth and held to it being always happiest when ignored. She learned to know the Importance of this virtue and to love it from a vision she had and which she described to me. Jesus showed her a vast plain studded with trees. In the centre there was a square from which a majestic tree rose above all the others. He said to her: "Those trees are the virtues, but the tallest and the most majestic tree is holy humility."

It was her humility which made her say on one occasion to Aunt Cecilia: "Signora whatever you do for me, do it as if I was a poor person from the streets; otherwise you will gain no reward." Her progress in this virtue was marvelous. The greater and dearer she became in God's eyes, the humbler she became endeavoring to lower herself before all' and seeking to hide and continually humble herself. I who have with her in the intimate family circle, know that she had a poor opinion of herself, that she always sought the humblest duties. I remember that in the last days of her sickness, the Sisters of Saint Camillus who were assisting her, wanted to know what was her favorite ejaculatory prayer, and she answered humbly: "My Jesus, mercy." This virtue was manifested by her looks and her modest and recollected demeanor, by her lowered voice, by her every act and word. She was indeed a model, an example and a school of humility for the whole household.'

After this magnificent testimony, the reader will not be astonished when we say that Blessed Gemma was truly athirst for humiliations. 'If through the mercy of God,' she wrote to Father Germanus, 'I have experienced happy moments, they were when I saw myself despised and humiliated.' And she prayed: 'May Jesus be glorified in the little humiliations He sends me!'

A prelate once visited Gemma, having heard her described as a soul possessing rare virtue. Guessing why he had come, she began to fondle a cat, and knowing that he thereupon despised her, she rejoiced that her stratagem had succeeded. The Prioress of the 'Mantellate' Nuns, Sister M. Agnes, coming upon her one day in the sacristy, pretended to take her for a sinner. 'What a smell of sins!' she said. 'I should not like to think, Gemma, that they were yours.' Gemma, believing her, became agitated and began to cry. 'Even Monsignor weeps when he has heard my confession,' she said, 'because he gets the smell of my sins.' At least that was what Gemma believed. Whilst she was still with the 'Mantellate' Nuns, she was asked by Aunt Cecilia, who had heard she could compose verses, to write a poem for one of those religious, who was to be received or professed. At first she promised to do it, but afterwards she said that such things were worldly, and the poem was not written. On another occasion, when she was asked by Aunt Cecilia to have some food, she answered: 'It is not food or drink that I want from you, but that you keep me hidden.'

Father Germanus would have liked her to sign her letters with 'Gemma of Jesus,' and explained to her that by such a signature she would mean: 'Gemma who desires to belong entirely to Jesus.'

But it seemed to Gemma audacious to unite her name - the name of a sinner - with the most holy Name. She tried again and again to do so, but did not succeed. She could not induce herself to sign her letters that way, and she remained 'Poor Gemma.' If her prayers were solicited, she did not refuse, but answered timidly as if seeking to hide herself: 'Yes, I shall pray,' but not another word, because, she said, sometimes pride can lurk in the use of such phrases as 'unworthy,' etc.

To increase this virtue in His servant, God gave her heavenly instructions. Thus once He allowed her to see the beauty of a soul in the state of grace, and the ugliness of a soul in sin.. Of this she wrote afterwards thus: 'One was in the grace of God. How beautiful it was! If you could only have seen it! It was clothed in light, like a sun, and then - but I cannot describe it. But the other was in the power of the Devil. How terrible! I shall not say more than this, that there were beasts all round it. How fearful! How ugly it was!' The vision suggested the making of a resolution: 'With the help of Jesus, I hope never to commit sin again.' This was not an astonishing resolution for one who considered herself vile and the fruit of sin.' 'That is my name,' she said.

Gemma carried the exercise of the virtue of humility so far that the very word pride filled her with alarm. Father Germanus wrote to warn her to be on her guard against pride, and this is how she answered:

'O my God, do You have pity on me; do You have pity on Thy ungrateful child! It is true, it is indeed true that pride is in me. Listen, scarcely had I read your letter, and had come to the word pride, when the Devil used it to cast me almost into despair. For about an hour I felt very miserable. The moment came when I could bear no more, and I ran away to cast myself before the Crucifix with my head upon the ground. I asked His forgiveness repeatedly, and at His holy Feet I asked Him to let me die, but He would not.'

Gemma could climb high up on the mountain of sanctity, because her virtue was solidly founded upon the rock of humility. Her maxims were: 'I know that whoever desires to mount very high, slips immediately and falls again to the plain.' 'Jesus drives away from Him all proud souls.' 'When Jesus desires to elevate a soul, He first humiliates it greatly.'

LADY POVERTY

Poverty is a sister virtue to humility, and poverty shone so brightly in Gemma that a Franciscan named Father Gentile Pardini did not hesitate to compare her to Saint Francis of Assisi. 'Gemma loved and practiced poverty like Saint Francis,' he said. 'To see her made one think of a little shepherdess who had not a care in the world.' The words, 'a little shepherdess,' was no doubt an allusion to the way she dressed. 'She could not have gone more poorly dressed,' deposed Sister Julia of Saint Joseph. 'Everyone knew her by her poor and modest little mantle,' said Don Andrew Bartoloni. 'When she had grown up,' her brother Guido declared, 'she always preferred to dress like a nun.' 'Even as a child,' said her teacher in catechism, Isabel Bastiani, 'she was indifferent to what she wore, and never once did I hear her talk about clothes. I never saw in Gemma the little natural defects which one finds in children. As regards this, she appeared to be a grown woman and not a child; she was as one sees her now in the little picture of her, with her hair parted in the middle, and tied behind her head with a piece of ribbon. And she wished it to be combed in that way. Whenever Aunt Cecilia asked her to let her hair come down over her forehead, she would answer: "I like to have my hair this way.'" And thus she continued to behave. The Gianninis would have been only too pleased to get her whatever she wanted, but she wanted nothing but her poverty.

Witnesses have described for us the singular manner in which Gemma dressed, but let Don Robert Andreuccetti speak for all: 'She loved poverty, not making a virtue of necessity, but out of pure love of virtue. She never complained, and always wore the simplest clothes, that is, a dress, a little mantle, and a straw hat; all of these were black. In the dyes of the world she appeared ridiculous, but for all that she never altered her style of dressing.'

We have already quoted the description of her famous mantle, given by one witness. Another witness called her hat 'an antiquated school hat.' She never wanted anything new. Sometimes her aunt at Camaiore sent her various articles of dress, but these she exchanged for old garments belonging to the elder girls of the Giannini family. When a new ribbon was bought for her hair, she wore it once out of obedience, but then immediately took it off. Signor Matthew asked Gemma to help his daughter Euphemia to pass an examination in French, saying that if she passed he would give Gemma a new dress. 'I shall do my best to help her pass the examination,' she answered, 'but I do not want the dress.'

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that some people should have asked the Gianninis why they kept a girl so poorly clothed. 'People used to ask us,' deposed Signora Justina, 'why we were not ashamed to have with us a girl so simply dressed.'

Basil Morelli, the Giannini butler, declared: 'People were astonished that Signora Cecilia should maintain and go out with a girl who was so poorly dressed as to make herself ridiculous. I heard this spoken about in a public vehicle.' 'It is not necessary for me to speak about her clothes,' said the lawyer, Joseph Giannini. 'They seemed ridiculous in their form and simplicity, not to say anything of their poverty. I shouldn't have gone out with her.'

At the time when Gemma was dividing her day between the 'Mantellate' Nuns and the Giannini household, her brother Guido married. Gemma was invited to the wedding, but nothing could induce her to go. However, she at length took the advice of the Mother Prioress and went, but in the same clothes as she always wore. The guests were very displeased, and so was the bride, who then met her for the

first time. Indeed the bride told her to go away, never to return, and expressed a wish that no one should bring her to the place again, because she was a stupid person. It must be said, however, that later on her opinion of Gemma changed and she conceived a great veneration for her. Guido indeed tells us that his sister stayed at their house at Bagni di S. Giuliano for two months during 1900 or 1901, and that she behaved towards himself and his wife 'with all kindness and attention, never complaining and considering excessive whatever was done for her.' Gemma on this occasion was accompanied by her Aunt Elisa who, in her testimony, does not agree with her nephew, for she says that they remained there only ten days. It was during her stay at this place that Gemma was seen to be wearing gloves while she was at dinner. 'What style!' her brother remarked. 'Eating your dinner with gloves on!' Gemma asked him to allow her to keep them on, and his wife pleaded for her. But after dinner on some pretext she induced her to take them off, and seeing the Stigmata she ran weeping to call Aunt Elisa.

Gemma gave her sister-in-law as a marriage present a beautifully bound copy of Philothea by Saint Francis de Sales, which had been given to her as a catechism prize. A silk parasol, likewise a gift, she presented to her cousin Rosa Bartelloni. Thus she went on stripping herself of everything earthly, from her earliest years having no other desire than to belong solely and entirely to Jesus.

JESUS ONLY

But God is jealous of the human heart, and demanded one more sacrifice from His Servant. Father Germanus had several times advised Gemma to detach herself completely from everything, without explaining himself further, and so Gemma with her accustomed ingenuousness asked Jesus what this meant: 'I have nothing and don't know from what

to detach myself; I have only Thee, my Jesus.' 'But, Father,' she wrote to her spiritual director, 'do you know what happened? Jesus said: "Are you not too attached to that tooth belonging to the Venerable Gabriel?" I was astonished, and I was about to make excuses, saying: "But, Jesus, it is a precious relic." I was almost crying, but Jesus said somewhat seriously: "My child, Jesus has said so, and that is enough."' And then she remembered that when Sister Mary, the portress of the 'Mantellate' Convent, asked her for a loan of "the relic in order to show it to the nuns, she had cried on parting with it; it appeared to her a sign of attachment, and she generously deprived herself of it, giving it to Signora Justina, who considered it doubly dear because of the sacrifice Gemma had made.

Her detachment from all that was not Jesus was truly heroic. Writing to Father Germanus, she said: 'In your Mass tomorrow morning, please ask Jesus to hide me in His Sacred Heart, that I may see nothing, feel nothing, think of nothing, love no one, but Him.' This was her continual prayer, her one aspiration. And everything served to sharpen the intensity of this desire. Aunt Cecilia told her to write to a relation, living far away. She could not help finishing the letter in this way: 'Jesus does not wish me to succeed in anything, because He wishes my mind to be occupied with Him alone.' Later on we shall see to what lengths she carried her detachment from everybody and everything, but here we shall only mention her detachment from her friends.

During her stay with the Gianninis, in the course of the same year, and within a few months of one another, her little sister Julia, and her brother Anthony, died. She was most resigned, so much so that she was able to offer consolation even to Aunt Cecilia, who was filled with great sorrow at the death of Julia especially. The reader will remember the affection Gemma had for this sister of hers, but she was

living a life of faith, and what counted more with her were eternal interests. 'But why are you crying?' she asked her adopted mother. 'Don't you know that she is on her way to Heaven?' When Anthony died she had a revelation that Julia was in Heaven. She said joyfully: 'Now I am no longer afraid. How good Jesus is! Before He gave me this new cross, He granted me the consolation of knowing that Julia was in Heaven.'

Gemma led a very secluded life, and even in Lucca she was known by few. She never in any way encouraged public attention, so much so that when after her death the fame of the marvels God was deigning to work through her began to spread abroad, her fellow citizens were very much astonished. They could hardly believe that God had bestowed in such profusion His choicest gifts upon that humble and obscure girl.

Even in her everyday dealings with those around her, she was unassuming, modest and reserved. Joseph, the advocate, deposed that had he not seen her several times in ecstasy, he would never have known the color of her eyes. The greater part of her work in the Giannini household had to do with the little children. She understood innocence and got on well with her charges. She liked to have sweets to give to them to help to make them all the more docile. These sweets she would obtain through Aunt Cecilia from the eldest boy of the family, who was then studying at the University of Pisa. Needless to say, she never tasted those dainties herself.

HER SPIRIT OF PENANCE

That which was related in the foregoing paragraph reveals Gemma's spirit of mortification. In mortification Gemma was a heroine. Whoever considers how prone young girls are to

vanity will readily admit that she was heroic, not only in her manner of dressing, but also in what Cecilia Giannini says about her: 'Never did I see her look at herself in a mirror.'

We have already seen how Gemma burned with the desire of practicing penance: and more will be said on this subject in the course of this work. Her heart became inflamed at the contemplation of Jesus Crucified. Her one desire was to be like Him. At table she provided herself with a chair somewhat lower than the others so that she would be more hidden. Her place at table was in the corner near Aunt Cecilia, very much in the background. She ate so little that Chevalier Matthew would sometimes say jokingly: 'You had better eat a little, Gemma, or I shall. make you take some medicine to give you an appetite.' She used to answer with one of her sweetest smiles. Annetta deposed: 'She would take her soup with a spoon that had holes in it, so as to let it appear that she was drinking it, and then when she thought she was unobserved, she took her plate to the kitchen, and was reproved by Aunt Cecilia for doing so. We used to say: "Find fault with us, but why mortify Gemma." Now and again Aunt Cecilia commanded her in virtue of holy obedience to eat, and she did so, but she had to vomit it up again.' These last words refer particularly to the complete abstinence from every food which she practiced from Pentecost to June, 1902, during which period she lived entirely on Sacramental Communion.

According to Signora Justina Giannini, Gemma slept very little. Sometimes when she was asked in the morning how she had slept, she answered: 'A short hour!' She also knew how to mortify her flesh with tools of her own making. On one occasion Aunt Cecilia found her in a faint on the ground, which was all covered with blood, and near her there was a scourge of iron. This Aunt Cecilia prudently hid under her clothes, so that when Gemma revived, she would think that

she had not been observed by anyone. Thus Chevalier Matthew deposed: 'I heard my sister say that she (Gemma) had a scourge, and that she used to beat herself with it. I can truly say that she fasted always, and it really appeared to me that she could not live in that way without a miracle.' And Brother Famiano declared: 'If she had been allowed to continue she would have shortened her life through mortification. Once she let me see a knotted cord which I understood she had worn around her waist. Her confessor had ordered her to take it off because the knots had eaten their way into her flesh. On one occasion she wanted me to exchange a scourge which was of iron for hers which was of cord, which as I noticed was covered with blood-stains.'

But there were those who watched over the Servant of God and who moderated the ardours of her desire for penance. Several times, both her confessor and her director deprived her of her instruments of penance. Father Germanus had done so and thus describes them: 'A belt studded with sixty sharp iron points; a scourge likewise of iron, with five thongs, and a long knotted cord in which she had inserted nails, which she wore tight around her waist.' With regard to this matter Mother Gemma deposed: 'She was obedient to her confessor when he moderated the ardour of her penance, and a thing that made me and all at home marvel was that the exercise of mortification, even though she was in delicate health, never exhausted her or made her incapable of carrying out her duties in the family. She did indeed seem to be sustained by a supernatural strength.'

THE ANGELIC VIRTUE

She who dealt so intimately with the Angels, and who was adorned with so many virtues, could not but be also remarkable for that virtue which is called angelic. This virtue was visible in her exterior, and appeared in a special way in

her countenance, so much so that Father Andreuccetti could say: 'Her look was something unique, and I was struck by it to an extraordinary degree, although I cannot describe what it was that struck me or how or why.' And he sums up his impressions of her in one pregnant phrase: 'The only human thing about Gemma was her body.'

The reader already knows something of the way in which she strove all her life to keep this beautiful virtue unsullied in her heart. She cultivated a special devotion to Saint Agnes, and to the other saints who were particularly remarkable for their purity. But it was above all to the Blessed Virgin that she entrusted the protection of her treasure, and for this purpose all her life long she never omitted to say three Hail Mary's every day with her hands under her knees. She was once surprised in this position by her Aunt Elisa and upon her asking for an explanation she replied: 'Grandmother taught me to do it. She said that if I said three Hail Mary's in that way, the Blessed Virgin would never allow me to commit a sin against purity.'

We have already alluded to her reserve, a reserve certainly suggested by her love of modesty. We shall here quote a deposition of Cecilia Giannini:

'She washed herself, yes, but only when no one else was in the room. She did not wish to be smart-looking, but she kept herself clean. While she slept in my room, a matter of three years, I never saw her dress or undress; she always did this behind a screen. Even during her last illness when she had to be visited by a doctor, she asked me not to look at her. With the doctor she was very bashful, and only allowed his attentions because she was told to do so, and then only in so far as was absolutely necessary. She could not have been more modest. Before her death, and once perhaps during

that same illness, I noticed that she had washed her feet, so as to prevent others from seeing them.'

Her love for the angelic virtue was so great that to defend it she performed acts which placed her by the side of the greatest heroes of Christian hagiography, once actually jumping into the icy waters of an open cistern in the garden in order to free herself from a violent temptation.

The exercise of this virtue made her most dear to the eyes of God; she herself was told so by her Guardian Angel. The fact is related in the Processes for the Beatification.

In one of the many visits of her Guardian Angel, she followed out the suggestions of Father Paul Tei, whose advice she had sought, being in doubt, either through modesty or fear for her chastity, regarding the reality of her heavenly visitor. The Angel smiled, and then - this is her own account of what happened - he knelt down, and with hands joined recited the words the priest says in the holy Mass from the Sanctus to the Elevation (that is, the Angelic Trisagion). Then he said: 'It is because of your great virginal purity that the Lord confers upon you so many graces.'

When Aunt Cecilia once observed that she should be most jealously careful of this virtue, and should strive to keep it unstained, she answered: 'I have nothing else to offer to Jesus.'

HER CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Before closing this chapter, perhaps already too long, we invite the reader to cast another look at this child reposing so calmly in the arms of God. She was living a life of Faith, and it seemed to her - so Monsignor Tei attested - that no matter what she asked of God, she would obtain it. And

because she was living this life of Faith, everything that concerned Jesus was dear to her. Thus in the Giannini household she desired to have charge of the domestic chapel, and Chevalier Matthew declares that even when they were in the country, the presence of Gemma was perceived from the cleanliness of the altars. When she was with the 'Mantellate' Nuns, on one occasion, according to Sister M. Julia of Saint Joseph, she wanted to polish the inside of a ciborium and only desisted when told that that could be done only by priests. She had great respect and veneration for priests, so great indeed that Chevalier Matthew could depose: 'I never knew her to say a word against a priest.' This is a thing rare enough even among pious women.

Her lively faith also led her to have at heart the welfare of religion, and to attend the preaching of the word of God. We are assured by Cecilia Giannini that she took a deep interest in the notices concerning the propagation of the Faith, and prayed earnestly for missionaries and for the conversion of infidels. We shall quote a deposition of Mother Gemma Giannini: [who was one of the older Giannini girls during Gemma's lifetime]

'I know that the Servant of God had always a great veneration for the word of God, and that she attended with great assiduity the sermons in the Cathedral, especially during Lent, and during missions. She did not read books of devotion much, because she was usually very busy, and being so advanced in the spiritual life she preferred to raise her soul to God and concentrate her thoughts upon Him. When she came to live with us she had only one book of devotion, but afterwards she began to make less and less use of it, as it seemed better to her to give vent to her heart in her own words. In times of aridity, that is, afterwards, towards the end of her life, she used to read, with great

fervor, a book containing the Psalms and the Gospels, and also "The Preparation for Death", by Saint Alphonsus Liguori.'

'I am full of misery,' she used to say, 'but with Jesus I can do all things.' She hoped abundantly in the Mercy of God, and her great love for Jesus allowed no room for the slightest doubt of His Goodness, nor could anything prevent her from casting herself full of trust into the arms of God, there to rest upon His Heart. 'Thy Mercy, O Lord,' she used to say, 'is the anchor of all my hopes. I realize that the Mercy of God is greater than my ingratitude.' 'How good Jesus always is!' she continued. 'I desire never to leave Jesus. I want to offer Him all I have; I want to offer Him myself. But what do I possess? Nothing, except my sins, my miseries, my great self-love. And this is the gift that I make to Jesus. But He will have compassion on my misery. He will give me strength; He will give me grace.'

This beautiful humility was united to a filial confidence, enabling her to say: 'I have found something I can give to Thee, O Jesus, my own nothingness.' 'I fall and fall and fall again, but Jesus is with me.' 'Sometimes it seems to me that Jesus can no longer forgive me. And then I shrug my shoulders, and think no more about sin.' 'When I remember my sins I am ashamed to seek and expect Heaven after having refused it so many times. But as soon as I look at my Jesus Crucified, I cannot do less, even with my many sins, than long for it ardently.'

And what had Gemma to fear, knowing that she was so loved by Jesus, and that she loved Him so much in return? 'I have found a Jesus,' she used to say, 'Who so captivates my heart that it cannot but long for Him.' Jesus opened the doors of the future and showed her the sorrows that awaited her. 'You tell me,' she answered, 'that You art preparing for

me a future full of suffering. But the future is in the hands of God, and therefore I am not terrified. You have so much, but I have nothing wherewith to repay Thee.' 'I have such confidence in Thee, ° Jesus, that even if I should see the gates of Hell open and myself on the edge of the abyss, I should not despair. And even if I should see both Heaven and Hell leagued against me, I should not give up hope of Mercy, because I should still trust in Thee.'

Gemma so endeavored to instill these sentiments in others that Father Gentile Pardini could declare 'Gemma was an apostle, and sought to excite others to practise the virtues she possessed herself, especially the virtue of Christian hope.'

It was from this abandonment that came Gemma's imperturbable equanimity in the face of every happening. She was in the arms of her Father, what then had she to fear? 'Even in her anxieties,' continued Father Pardini,' and in the midst of the most terrible assaults of the Devil, she remained so resigned, so calm, so content, that she seemed always to be like a child at play.' From this abandonment also came her intense desire to fulfill always and in all things the adorable Will of God. 'Her motto,' said a witness in the Processes, 'was to fulfill the Will of God always and in everything.'

Since therefore the heart of Gemma was so well disposed and adorned with the flowers and the fruits of such beautiful virtues, God was enabled to bestow upon her His best gifts. The soil was well prepared to receive them and to make them fructify for her own welfare and the welfare of souls and for the glory of God.

HER STRUGGLE AGAINST THE POWERS OF DARKNESS - BEGINNING OF THE ATTACK

God loves souls; the Devil hates them, and hates them the more venomously the more they are favored by Heaven. That Gemma was very dear to God is clear to anyone who has read these pages thus far, and the hatred of the Devil for this soul that caused him so much confusion, will not surprise the reader. The account of the way the powers of evil attacked this ingenuous and innocent child will seem almost legendary, but the facts have been vouched for by persons worthy of belief. That these facts and the apparitions to be referred to, were anything but imaginary, is clear from the observable effects they produced in Gemma.

The enemy of souls began his attack upon her very early. Perhaps from her first steps along the road to sanctity the Devil guessed the shameful defeats he would suffer through her, and decided to lose no time. Before she went to live with the Gianninis and while she was still in her own home, she was already accustomed to terrifying apparitions of the spirit of evil, and had experienced in her virginal body those altogether undesirable effects which often accompany his presence.

'They (the demonic apparitions) were waiting for her in her room in the evening,' deposed Cecilia Giannini, referring to the time when Gemma still slept at home, 'in the form of dogs, of cats, of men, black monkeys like those one sees in a menagerie. Gemma suffered a great deal, and even spoke to her confessor about them, and he, having asked me through Gemma to come to see him, told me to find out how these things were happening.' Sometimes on her return she met two of these strange men, who made her swing round violently, and then beat her with ropes. But what did these blows matter to one so eager for suffering, even when they were struck with satanic hatred? 'I ought to scourge myself,' she used to say to them. 'You can do it for me.' Things came

to such a pass that the Evil One took the form of a person known to her, who used to work in her father's pharmacy, a good boy with whom Gemma had never spoken; She occupied a room next to that of her Aunt's who testified that he never had entered their house.

During her serious illness, a certain Signora Rossi used to bring her sweets, a practice of hers when visiting the sick. The sweets were placed in a chest of drawers, but when they were again taken out they were found to be so spoiled that they were unfit for use. Aunt Elisa asked Gemma whether the children had been at the drawers, but she answered: 'No one has been near them; it is the Devil himself who has done that.' Thus the malign spirit sought to destroy the few comforts which the charity of others procured for in her sickness.

Subsequently these persecutions became so real that her aunts who slept near and were subject to disturbances, thought of giving her a room more remote from them. Thus Gemma wrote to Monsignor Volpi:

'Aunt Elisa got out of bed because she said she heard me crying, and I told her I had cried. I was almost in despair. I besought her to return to bed and not to wake the others. But she began to argue with me and with herself, and then went away. This morning, however, she told me that she would give me that dark room you know of, to sleep in. "There you will be at your ease," she said, "and besides I do not want to miss my night's sleep!"'

One day the Prioress of the 'Mantellate' Nuns, Sister Agnes, saw Gemma holding up her left elbow with her right hand. She was obviously in pain and confessed to her: 'I am in great pain here.' On being asked what had happened, she

replied: 'I have done nothing. Chiappino' - that is what she called the Devil - 'has given me a blow here on the arm.'

Still more serious was the following incident which is attested to by the same Sister Agnes to whom, on the advice of Monsignor Volpi, Gemma confided the secrets of her soul. We shall quote her exact words:

'She had many anxieties, especially because of the Devil. He tried to terrify her, appeared to her and struck her blows. She told me once that one evening on returning home and entering her own room, she saw Monsignor Volpi sitting there in his Episcopal robes. Filled with terror she ran to cast herself on her knees before a picture of our Blessed Lady of Sorrows. Whilst she was thus praying, this apparition in the likeness of Monsignor Volpi, took out a knotty stick and beat her unmercifully, so that he made her spit blood. After that he disappeared and everything was peaceful once more, but nevertheless she remained all that night in prayer before the Blessed Virgin.'

The following incident was attested to by Marianna Bianchini:

'One day when she was living, as far as I know, in the Via del Biscione and used to frequent the Church of Saint Peter Somaldi, she told me that the Devil often tried to prevent her from receiving Holy Communion. She said that the Devil in the guise of a coarse looking man would push her and even throw her down on the ground in the mud, in order to compel her to return home, and that she used to go back and change and then return to the church to receive Holy Communion. Sometimes she met him at the door of the Church of Saint Peter, in the appearance as usual of a coarse-looking man, and he said to her: "Do not go to receive Communion; you will commit a sacrilege. Last night

you were guilty of wicked things!" Gemma usually paid no attention to him, but she confessed to me that on one occasion she did listen to him and did not receive Holy Communion although she went to the church to hear Mass. On leaving the church she found the man there at the door, and he was pleased with her and rejoiced because she had listened to him at last. Then Gemma realized that she had been tricked by the Evil One, and returning immediately to the church she received Holy Communion. She confided to me that on turning back with the firm resolution to go to Communion, she said to the man: "Oh, I understand!" And by that she meant to say: "So you are the Devil! Well, I am going to receive Holy Communion to spite you."

Gemma's reception of Holy Communion must have been very displeasing to the enemy of souls, and that is why he endeavored in other ways to prevent her from receiving It. Sister Julia Sestini attested, that one day Gemma asked her whether she would have courage enough to receive Holy Communion when the Devil stood by the side of the priest with weapons in his hands. Sister Julia answered that it would be a beautiful thing to die thus with Jesus in one's heart. Gemma confessed that she had received the same answer from her confessor, and then confided to her friend that when receiving Communion she very often saw the Devil by the side of the priest, threatening her with death.

THE ATTACK BECOMES FIERCER

The Devil never laid down his arms in this attack upon Gemma. The very fact that he was unable to conquer her in anything, only deepened his hatred. It was not only to keep her away from Holy Communion that he persecuted her. His assaults were directed against all the virtues. One would think, as Father Germanus remarks, that the Devil would have had something more important to do in his kingdom of

darkness. Certainly nothing seemed to please him more than to torment this innocent child, always employing new means of assailing her with temptations, and disturbing her with his persecutions.

The violence of these attacks increased when she went to live permanently with the Gianninis. Because her soul was every day becoming more absorbed in God, Satan had recourse to every stratagem to hinder her flights towards the supernatural. We mention here some of the vexations to which she was subjected by the Devil, vexations attested to in the Processes. Afterwards we shall return to her own writings. Her ingenuousness and singular candour of soul being admitted, there is no reason to doubt the veracity of her own confessions, especially when they were obtained from her through the command of obedience. It took a lot to make Gemma speak of them herself: 'You would need tongs to get a word out of her,' said Cecilia Giannini, referring to these confidences. Often I grew tired of putting questions, as in the end it was difficult to get her to speak. It would seem that it took her an hour to say something about the matter. These facts, moreover, to which we have referred are not unusual in Christian hagiography.

Because Gemma confided in her so much, Aunt Cecilia often had proof of these facts. Sometimes she saw the bed shake under Gemma, who was trembling from head to foot, and she knew then that she was being beaten by the infernal enemy. Cecilia sought to help her by the use of holy water. One day these attacks occurred while she was in ecstasy. Cecilia placed the scapular of the Seven Dolours over her shoulders and immediately she was freed. 'Now, now, vent your rage upon me if you can!' she was heard to say to the demons. And then she remembered that Monsignor had forbidden her to speak to the demon, and wishing to confess it as a disobedience she told it to Aunt Cecilia. Aunt Cecilia

was standing by and so could hear her say that the Devil had beaten her so much that she believed - these are her own words - that her lungs would collapse. Then she saw the Devil retire to a corner under the window, and it was at this moment that she spoke the words referred to above. Aunt Cecilia told her that it was the Blessed Virgin who liberated her, and Gemma thereupon asked for the scapulars and wore them ever afterwards, even to the grave.

These vexations - we still quote from Aunt Cecilia - did not cease as long as she lived. In the beginning they occurred at intervals, but continuously towards the end of her life. It made one shudder to witness her sufferings. When she knelt down to pray, the Devil fell upon her from behind. When she went to bed, Aunt Cecilia, who slept in the next room, heard the usual noises and the usual blows, and running to her very often found her either dragged under the bed or stretched out on her face, now in one place, now in another, and heard her all the while beseeching Jesus: 'Do not let that ugly beast come near me!' However, one thing particularly remarked by all who witnessed these frightful scenes was her great modesty. For example, never would she allow her feet to be seen, but kept them tucked up under her dress, which she did not take off on going to bed, contenting herself with removing her corset because she had been ordered by her adopted mother to do so. In particular the Devil must have feared and hated Gemma's prayers, for he used every means of preventing her from saying them, disturbing her, striking her, and knocking her down. Aunt Cecilia deposed that she saw her while at prayer fall backwards, 'with her legs from the knees down tucked under her.'

But there is more still. There was a period lasting about a month when, according to Monsignor Moreschini, Gemma seemed to be really obsessed. This is what he says:

'Scarcely had she begun to pray when, as I observed myself on two occasions within four days, the Devil assaulted her, and obtaining dominion over her senses made her behave like one obsessed. She was thrown down upon the earth; she repulsed whoever offered her any object of devotion; she spat upon the Crucifix and upon the picture of the Blessed Virgin, and I remember that one day she caught hold of the rosary from my cincture and broke it into bits. However, I must say this, that at such times neither I nor any of those who saw her, ever perceived in her even the least act against good morals. She never uttered words except, as I learned from Signora Cecilia, to say: "Go away, go away!" when the latter drew near to her. When I offered her any sacred object, she used the same words to me. I exorcised her, but without result the first time, since although she became calm after half an hour, the assaults were renewed. The second time I used the exorcisms she remained calm, and then I gave her a relic of the Holy Cross to put on and ordered her to ask Jesus to free her from those attacks of the Devil. From that moment she was left entirely free.'

Gemma wanted to keep this relic, and Monsignor Moreschini consenting, she put it round her neck and kept it there always. After her death it was given to her friend, Euphemia, who afterwards became Mother Gemma.

One must not be surprised on reading of this incident. 'Possession is not an absolute evil,' says Saudreau, summing up the teaching of theologians and mystics. 'Sin alone is a true evil. Possession is, for the afflicted one, a terrible suffering, but a suffering that can be for the greater good of a soul which will be glad and thank God for it throughout all eternity. More frequently it is a trial and not a chastisement. God at times permits the most innocent and holiest persons to undergo this severe trial.'

SATANIC RAGE

But perhaps the apparitions which afflicted Gemma most were those in which the unclean spirit took filthy and shameless forms in order to try and obscure the candor of her soul. It was because of one of these assaults that, as previously mentioned, she plunged, in the middle of winter, into a cistern of icy water. It was a famous bath, as she herself called it afterwards, which certainly would have caused her death if she had not been rescued by an invisible hand.

And it was not only satanic jealousy of the rapid strides Gemma was making along the road to sanctity that was the cause of the persecutions she had to undergo. This hate was increased still more on account of her zeal for the salvation of souls. Since nothing ever made her desist from an apostolate in which, as we shall see, her particular mission consisted, the Devil intensified his attacks. Jesus warned His Servant and she told Father Germanus about it thus: 'After Communion two days ago, Jesus said: "My child, the demon is preparing to make violent war upon you." And these words He made me hear every moment in my heart. "Pray." Who will be the victor, the Devil or my soul? Oh, how this thought afflicts me! How will this war be decided?' On this warning there followed a threat: 'War, war, upon your soul!' These words resounded in her ears for several days. Father Germanus was also included in this threat, and shortly afterwards the first attack was made.

Upon undertaking the direction of Gemma's soul, Father Germanus had commanded her to write down the history of her past life, on the pretext of knowing her sins better, but in reality to obtain an account of the marvels which God had secretly worked in her soul. To overcome her objections, this was to be called a general confession. Even here she

experienced great repugnance, because she thought that Father Germanus would be scandalized on coming to know her sins, and would pay no more attention to her soul. But again obedience won the day.

Gemma set to work and wrote about a hundred pages, in which she artfully did her best to hide the abundant gifts which God had showered upon her, by the confession of sins with which she declared she had spoiled them. However, contrary to her wishes, she succeeded in writing an admirable autobiography. This humble but glorious confession excited the rage of the Devil. As he had sought to prevent its being written, so he tried to put obstacles in the course of the work, appearing to her in visible form and saying: 'Well done, well done, write away. It is all my work. Where can you hide yourself now?' But Gemma continued and finished her task.

But the Devil would not give up the struggle and endeavored to get rid of the pages that were such a cause of confusion to him. The general confession, or we should say, the autobiography, was given, by Father Germanus's directions, to Aunt Cecilia, who then waited for a favorable opportunity of sending it to him. But one day the manuscript which she had put under lock and key disappeared and could not be found. The Devil himself had taken it, as he made known to Gemma. She wrote to Father Germanus:

'One night - I do not remember what night it was - I was sleeping peacefully when the Devil came with a temptation somewhat bad. I fought for more than an hour or so; I prayed, made Signs of the Cross, etc. One invocation only to the Immaculate Conception freed me altogether, but he, being furious, wanted to have his revenge. He would have liked to strike me, but as this had been forbidden him since that time the Father Provincial chased him away, he could

not do it. He cried out: "War upon your Father; your manuscript is in my hands!" And he went away.'

To compel the restoration of the manuscript to its place Father Germanus had recourse to exorcisms, and it was returned; but in what a state! All the pages were smoke-stained and singed, just as if they had been held at a fire. The writing, however, was still legible, and so Gemma had not to do it a second time. The manuscript, such as it came from the hands of the Devil, is now preserved by the Postulator General of the Passionists, and is an eloquent monument of the powerless rage of the angel of darkness against the humility of the Servant of God.

In continuation of the letter quoted above, Gemma said: 'An hour or so after I had been to confession, the Devil said: "As long as you are doing it for yourself do what you like, but be sure and do nothing to help sinners or you will pay me dearly for it." Father, tell me something. How will all this end? The Devil is using every means at his disposal, and is thinking of others.'

And the Evil One did indeed use every means in his power, but all his efforts were in vain. He tried to cause trouble between Monsignor Volpi and Father Germanus by letters which, if they were not actually written by him, must, from the poison they contained, have been written at his dictation or under his inspiration. To bring discredit on the Servant of God he took from a desk the letters Gemma had received from her director - letters she kept religiously and read and re-read for her spiritual profit, and scattered them about on the floor;' where they were found the next morning. Naturally Gemma was suspected, and she thereupon wrote immediately to Father Germanus:

'Father, Father, Jesus is still exposed upon the altar. Run to Him and ask Him who it was that scattered my letters (yours) all over the floor. I am suspected, but it seems to me I did not do it. They all know about it because it was thought that there were thieves in the house and they were all called. Do you understand me, Father? All your letters were found thrown about the room. Jesus will explain everything to you. I have told my confessor, and he said it was the Devil. Who knows what the Devil will do next, Father; but if you think it right, let the household know.'

She had guessed the reason of these paltry stratagems of the angel of darkness. 'Yes, yes,' she wrote, 'the monster will redouble his efforts to deprive me of help, because he sees that this help is for me a great blessing. But if even this should happen, Jesus at any rate will come just as often to my heart.' With this in view, the malign spirit first of all tried to shake her trust in her confessor, actually taking his appearance and sitting in his place in the confessional. On one occasion the Servant of God recognized him when he spoke, his words being so different from those she was accustomed to hear from the pious Monsignor Volpi, and she fled away horrified. At another time his insinuations were so subtle that she was almost on the point of believing him, and Father Germanus attests that it took him a long time to restore her peace of mind.

Against Father Germanus the Devil's efforts were unceasing. Gemma was sometimes about to yield. She mentions this herself in a letter: 'I had indeed lost all my confidence in the Father. My enemy, that Devil who is full of limitless deceit, was making me see so clearly that the Father wanted me to lose my soul that I had believed him well enough. But Jesus has enlightened me.' 'The enemy does not neglect to visit me from time to time,' she wrote with her accustomed candor to her director. 'He would like to take away again the

peace of mind you gave me. But Jesus has helped me and he has not been able to do anything. It is enough that I make an act, or say a prayer, or that I begin to meditate, to make that ugly thing begin his attacks, saying: "What does he care about you? He is neglecting his duty; he is a chatterbox." 'And would you know how many temptations he suggests about you! How he tries to make me believe that you are mad, that you are a soothsayer, etc. At other times he makes these words resound in my ears: "Oh yes, trust yourself to him, to that fool of a charlatan! That has made you believe in him?"'

What was the impression made on Father Germanus by these anything but desirable compliments? He certainly remembered the words spoken to Gemma by the Devil: 'War, war upon thy Father, and upon your souls,' and her remark: 'It seems as if the beast is more furious with you than with me.' 'And I can say,' he added some years later in his biography of Gemma, 'that the Devil knew well how to keep his word.'

We cannot resist quoting here several extracts from her correspondence. While letting us into her confidence with regard to the efforts of the Devil to injure her soul, they also reveal the sufferings she endured during this trial.'

She wrote to her director:

'A new attack was made yesterday soon after I had been to confession. Listen, Father! The confessor said that he believed it was better to discontinue those small penances he had allowed me to practise for some time past. To tell the truth, I did not like doing this at all. But as the confessor had often told me that the thing that pleased Jesus most was obedience (and it seems that I am beginning to understand this a little) I assured him that I was content to do whatever

he desired. If you knew how the confessor tires himself out trying to make me good, and in particular, obedient! But my head is made of wood, and my body, when there is question of obedience, how slothful it is! At any rate, when I arrived home after confession I took away everything and I was therefore very much at peace. However, it did not last long. As soon as I had a moment to myself, for it was the time of my prayer, I knelt down and began to say the Rosary of the Five Wounds of Jesus. At the fourth Wound I saw before me a figure like Jesus, freshly scourged all over, with his heart laid open and bleeding. I finished the Rosary, and then I said in a loud voice:

"Blessed be Jesus and Mary!" He did not answer me. I repeated it and he said: "Blessed, blessed," but he did not pronounce the names of Jesus and Mary. I understood who it was, and made the Sign of the Cross. He continued, however, to stay with heart open and bleeding, and he began by saying: "Is it thus, my child, that You repay me? Look at me; see how much I have suffered for thee. And now You canst not give me the consolation of those penances. After all, they did not amount to much, and You canst very well continue them as before." "No, no," I replied, "I wish to obey; and if I do what You desire, I disobey."

And so on this occasion also the astute enemy had to withdraw in confusion. For Jesus had come to her and had given her a sign by which she might know when the Devil was near and speaking to her. 'One morning after Holy Communion,' she herself wrote, 'it seemed to me that Jesus warned me that when I saw anything, I should immediately say those words (that is, Blessed be Jesus and Mary); if the words were repeated in return, it was from Jesus, if not, it was from the Devil.' Thus Jesus continued to comfort her. The only fear that troubled Gemma after these assaults and these apparitions was the fear of having offended Jesus. She

complained of this to Him. 'I allow these things to happen,' He answered, 'in order that all may know that you are weak and can sin; and then they will know your misery, and you will learn to be humble, truly humble. With all your defects, it only requires a little thing to make you proud!' 'But, my Jesus,' Gemma replied, 'at least grant that I may not offend Thee again.' And Jesus then answered: 'Do not follow your own will, and you will be always safe.'

The reader will pardon us if we linger a little longer on this subject of the diabolical assaults which were inflicted upon Gemma. She wrote to her confessor:

'Monsignor, the Devil has again attacked me Listen! Yesterday Aunt told me to draw a bucket of water. I drew the water, and filled the jugs. I then took the bucket to put it back in its place, and on my way I had to pass an image of the Heart of Jesus. On seeing that image my heart gave three or four violent jumps. I saluted Jesus with these words: "O my Jesus, hasten to grant me the grace to be united for ever with Thee. Make me so much Thine that we two can never be separated one from the other." Shortly after I had pronounced these words I received such a heavy blow on my left shoulder that I fell to the ground, but nothing was broken. I do not understand what all this means. But it hurt me very much.'

There was another attack on the following day: 'This time there were actually two. I was terrified. I was thinking of Jesus, but I was unable to call upon Him by word of mouth. The Blessed Virgin had said to me just before: "The attack is about to begin, and it will last until you have in your hands an image of Confrater Gabriel." This was true.'

In her next letter to Monsignor Volpi, Gemma mentions another visitation:

'He said that when you decide to put me in a Convent he will not let me go, and that on the evening before, he will tear me to pieces with pincers. Then he beat me a little. With the help of holy water, and the intercession of Saint Paul of the Cross I finally got rid of him. I began to pray a little and I was in the middle of my meditation when he came again. I said to him then: "Go away, filthy beast! Do you not see that instead of making me lose my soul you are helping me to save it?" He ran off quickly very far away. I continued my prayers, and so everything ended well.'

The following temptation was perhaps the worst that could afflict the soul of one who was so full of love for God. Here is her own description of it:

'At about half-past nine, he (the Devil) left me for a while because I said very fervently:

"Welcome sufferings, welcome the Cross." Hardly had I said these words when he went away. I took the Crucifix between my hands and became a little recollected. Jesus came to give me His Cross. I took it and at that moment He gave me the marks in my hands and feet, with great pain. I wanted to get up and go down on my knees to make the Holy Hour, but just then that beast returned, this time in the form of a young man who whispered into my ear: "What are you doing? You are indeed stupid to pray to a malefactor, One who desires to be revenged upon you. See what He has done to you, nailed you to a cross just the same as He is! See the harm He does to you! Trample upon Him; spit in His face, tell Him to leave you alone, and that I am going to be your guide." I kissed Jesus to spite the Devil and said: "O my Jesus, I thank Thee for all the graces You have given me, and I desire to love Thee with all my heart." And all the while he (the Devil) was whispering in my ear: "How can you love a malefactor condemned to death; a man you do not know?"

Look at me! I am a fine young man who does no one any harm. That person, however, makes you suffer always; I on the contrary would make you always happy. If you obey me I shall free you from all the pain in your hands and feet. If you pay attention to me I shall make you happy and bring you with me." Having said all these things to me, he left me, and I began to make the Holy Hour, and I made it well. Scarcely had I knelt down when Jesus came and I conversed with Him for a little while. I asked Him where He had been. "I was near you," He answered.'

Against these assaults of the enemy, which became more and more frequent, God gave Gemma one particular help among others in Saint Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin. After one of these attacks, she invoked him. He appeared to her and said: 'If the temptation fills your heart with fear, and your soul is on the point of yielding to the enemy, have recourse to me, and then you can rest assured of victory.' On other occasions he appeared to her, and placing his hand on her head, made her say three times: 'From the snares of the Devil, deliver us, O Lord!' And thus she was freed from the temptation.

Even in her ecstasies she was subjected to these diabolical attacks, and the bystanders were often moved to pity and terror as she struggled against the Angel of Darkness.

VICTORIOUS

This bitter and painful struggle lasted throughout the life of the Servant of God. But notwithstanding the astuteness of the enemy she was always victorious. He assailed her in every way. He attacked every virtue. He even appealed to that weakness in women which caused Eve to fall in the earthly paradise, for on one occasion he made it appear that there were about fifty children with candles in their hands

around her bed, and that, led by a bishop, they bowed down and honored her. But this time the Devil suffered a complete defeat.

Later on we shall tell of the efforts the Devil made to disturb the last hours of Gemma's earthly life. Here we cannot omit to quote the hymn of thanksgiving she was heard to utter in ecstasy towards the end of her life, as she reflected on the battles she had fought and the victories she had gained.



'I have begun to consider the great battles which with Thy aid I have won against the demon. They are so many! Is it possible, O Lord, that without Thy assistance I could have conquered in such violent conflicts? Who knows how many times my faith would have wavered, if You had not helped me. If You had not come to my aid, my hope and my charity would have grown weak. If You, the eternal Light, had not enlightened my intellect, it would have become obscured! And, O Jesus, how many times my love would have become weak, if You had not strengthened it with Thy caresses! And my will - the power of my soul which counts most - this will of mine would have become slothful many times, if You had not come with Thy fire to inflame it. I acknowledge that all my victories were the work of Thy infinite love.'

TO THE HEIGHTS! - SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENA

The life of Blessed Gemma Galgani is full of the most surprising marvels. To confound the pride of mankind in this age of positivism, God has been pleased to allow Himself to be glorified in the humble Virgin of Lucca. And it is

necessary to go far back in the history of Christian holiness to find souls as privileged as she was.

In the preceding pages we have already mentioned some of these marvels. Other extraordinary things have only been touched upon in passing, as it were. And so as not to weary the reader, we have not lingered over useless details.

The raising of a Servant of God to the honours of the altars certainly does not imply the recognition of such supernatural gifts; this is a secure principle, beyond all discussion. Supernatural phenomena have no essential relation to sanctity or to the virtues that constitute sanctity. They are a free gift of God who, in the designs of His Providence, may grant them even to those who merit them least. When the Church glorifies one of her children she presents him or her to us not only for our admiration, but also for our imitation. And because the Christian virtues are the foundation of all sanctity, she is on the look-out for them more than for anything else. As the Church has declared in proclaiming the heroicity of her virtues, this foundation was most solid in Blessed Gemma.

But in proclaiming the heroic nature of her virtues, the Sovereign Pontiff made no pronouncement about the supernatural phenomena. The Decree which gave her the right to be called Venerable was concerned with the virtues practiced by her, and with nothing else. The Holy Father, nevertheless, referred to 'the summits exceedingly high and difficult of ascent,' adding that the virtues of which the Decree speaks were the base upon which were raised these 'summits exceedingly high and difficult of ascent,' and that 'around the foot of these dizzy heights, the familiar plain stretched out smilingly.'

The Decree declared that Blessed Gemma lived on the earth with the body whilst her soul was even then a citizen of Heaven; so great indeed was the ardor of the charity that was drawing this most innocent maiden to God, that she seemed freed from the burden of her body, already a stranger to the passing things of this world.' This is more than enough to give Gemma a place among those fortunate souls whose conversation is in Heaven, and who can say: 'Now I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me.' These words describe the life of the Seraphim before the throne of God - the Seraphim who, according to Saint Gregory, burn with an incomparable love. It is not astonishing, therefore, that 'freed from the burden of her body,' Gemma should have been rapt into ecstasies.'

As we have begun, so we shall continue with confidence to treat of these supernatural gifts 'that were not lacking in the humble Servant of God.'

ECSTASIES

Very early in life Gemma began to have ecstasies. The reader will remember that when she entered the Giannini family these supernatural manifestations were already familiar to her, and also that if Monsignor Volpi insisted that Cecilia Giannini should keep Gemma with her as far as possible, it was precisely because these manifestations were making things in her own home more difficult every day.

In the Giannini household not much importance was attached at first to these extraordinary happenings. It was thought that they were the result of some form of illness. As the reader will remember, Chevalier Matthew took her into the family out of charity. The first to realize that Gemma was receiving extraordinary graces was Cecilia Giannini, and there began from that moment the latter's great mission in

life - a mission under the direction of Monsignor Volpi and later of Father Germanus, to protect Gemma and to defend the precious gifts God had deigned to bestow upon her.

Following Father Germanus, the witnesses in the Processes declared that Gemma's ecstasies were of several kinds, namely, the small, the great and the extraordinary. We have already spoken of the extraordinary ecstasies. They happened twice a week, on Thursday at about eight o'clock in the evening until about three o'clock on Friday afternoon. They also happened irregularly at other times during the year. They came on her - these periodic ecstasies - mostly during the evening meal. Their approach could be perceived from her profound recollection. Then she unobtrusively got up from her place and retired to her room. In a few minutes she was on her knees with her hands joined, her eyes raised towards Heaven, and completely wrapped out of her senses. When the ecstatic rapture overtaking her made itself felt more strongly she would place herself upon her bed, and then they would find her, as a rule, in a sitting posture, wrapt in ecstasy. These ecstasies lasted ordinarily for an hour, and among the extraordinary things that happened during them was her participation in the sufferings of the Sacred Passion.

The ecstasies called great, did not last as long. On these occasions she was also completely rapt out of her senses. They took place mostly in the morning at Mass, or during visits to the Blessed Sacrament at Forty Hours, or on similar occasions. The return of her senses was spontaneous, and according to the witnesses, it was very pleasant to watch her wake up out of an ecstasy. She seemed like one who on finishing a conversation with one person, turned smilingly to speak to another. Sometimes she covered her eyes with her hands as if repeating to herself the words of Saint Ignatius:

'Oh how uninviting the earth is to one whose gaze is fixed on Heaven!'

The little ecstasies were, on the other hand, very frequent, often occurring several times a day, and they happened in an altogether spontaneous and simple manner. Necessarily this meant that she was somewhat rapt out of her senses. The visible world disappeared from her view and she became profoundly recollected. Without any movement whatsoever preceding or accompanying this flight of her spirit, she was in Heaven, and the bystanders could see this from the way she fixed her bright eyes upwards or towards the point of the vision.

Therefore in the ecstasies that were of short duration and, for the most part, noticeable, only the loss of the sense of touch was complete, and consequently she could while in this state write letters, engage in spiritual conferences, and read the breviary. This is attested to by Father Germanus, who wrote:

'Once we were sitting at table; Gemma at one side with her breviary in her hand, and I at the other. We recited alternately and she read the lessons of the nocturns and answered the responsories and versicles with admirable exactness, turning over the pages regularly. But how could she do this? I confess that I have never been able to understand it. She was in ecstasy and dead to every impression of touch. Though she used her eyes when reading, yet she was quite insensible to the heat of the candle when I held it close to them, as I have done repeatedly. During this devout recital of the Office, she was unable to see or hear anything else; no sooner was it stopped for any reason, than she returned to the use of her senses, to lose them again on resuming the Divine Praises where they had been interrupted.'

This ecstatic state might occur in Gemma at any place or time, even when she least expected it. As a rule, however, she had a "presentiment of its approach. She then endeavored to distract her attention or at least to withdraw so that others would not perceive it. Cecilia Giannini remembered that Gemma often asked her to sing or talk to her, in order to distract her mind.

And certainly it did not take much to wrap into ecstasy one who could say of herself: 'I have no other thought in my mind but the thought of Jesus.' She considered herself guilty of the gravest fault if she forgot the presence of God even for a moment. Often she had to do violence to herself to resist the impulses of love she experienced. 'If you knew,' she wrote to Father Germanus, 'how I have to resist myself when I am with people and they speak of Jesus, of Heaven or of similar things.

'Sometimes I am compelled to hide myself; often I have to ask the person who is speaking to change the subject, otherwise I should run the risk of dying even.' Brother Famiano testified that one day when speaking to her about the Good Thief he repeated the words spoken by Jesus: 'This day You shall be with Me in Paradise,' and immediately Gemma was rapt into ecstasy.

Gemma's life can be described as one long ecstasy. Her adopted mother deposed: 'I can say that Gemma's life, at least that part of it which she passed with me, was like a vision or a continual ecstasy.' Monsignor Moreschini deposed substantially the same thing: 'All that was necessary to make her go into ecstasy was to pray or to listen to holy conversation, especially about the Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ.' Certainly it can be said that Gemma's conversation was in Heaven.

We shall now quote the descriptions of Gemma in ecstasy, given by witnesses in the Processes. The first is that of Chevalier Matthew Giannini, the head of the fortunate family that gave her a home:

'The ecstasies I saw always occurred in one of the rooms, but not always in the same room or in the same place. Sometimes they happened when she was on her knees before the Crucifix, sometimes when she was in bed, sometimes even when she was seated in a chair. Ordinarily, however, she knelt erect, her head held up, her hands joined with fingers interlacing, and her eyes either wide open or half closed. I never saw her raised above the earth. She was so absolutely without movement as to seem rigid. She never blinked, even when hands were moved rapidly in front of her eyes, which were always like glass, or when a lighted candle was held close to them. They were fixed upon the Crucifix, if there was one, or towards a point where it seemed the person stood with whom she was in communication. Whilst she was in this state Gemma appeared not to participate in or even to hear our conversation, and I am certain she did not hear what was said. We spoke in a low voice, it is true, but our words were quite audible, and if she had not been in ecstasy she could have heard us and even seen us.'

From the deposition of Joseph Giannini, Matthew's son, we take the following particulars:

'When she was in ecstasy she sat in an easy chair with her head raised slightly and resting on the back of the chair. Her body seemed like a laid-out corpse, but her legs were gathered in under the chair and completely covered by her dress. Her hands were motionless, or at least I do not remember ever to have seen them move. The chair was a comfortable one, with a rather long seat and a high back, so that she could lie down almost at full length upon it.

'The impression she gave me was that of a dead person, but nevertheless she used to speak, and had, as I myself have seen, her eyes open, and raised towards Heaven. Although they were fixed and never blinked, they were alive and seemed to see something or someone invisible to us. Her body rested peacefully. There was no discharge of saliva from her lips, no clenching of teeth, nor any convulsive motion. I never touched her, but my Aunt told me that her body always had the usual warmth. My Aunt never massaged her, or applied perfumed spirits or hot fomentations. She told me that in her ecstasies there were no convulsive movements, that on the contrary she was most peaceful, just as if she was asleep. She used to speak in her ecstasies, but in a voice that was scarcely audible, being always in conversation with the Blessed Virgin or our Divine Lord. Gemma's countenance often changed its expression, according to the subject of the conversation, or the answers she received. Sometimes she was very pale; sometimes very flushed.'

The deposition of Mother Gemma Giannini is substantially the same. She also records that on one occasion she took Cecilia Giannini's place near Gemma. She saw two luminous rays reflected in her eyes, and felt that Jesus, to Whom Gemma was speaking, was close by, and fell down upon her knees. This was also the effect which others experienced when present at Gemma's ecstasies. Thus the priest Agrimonti often assisted at them on his knees and in tears.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GENUINE ECSTASIES

Taking into consideration Gemma's entire life, we must conclude that the ecstasies described in the Processes were divine in origin. Many things point to this: her great fear of deceiving or of being deceived; the progress she made in virtue after these extraordinary manifestations, especially in

humility, charity and obedience; her perfect tranquility of mind on every occasion; the judgment of learned men who saw them and who have left sworn testimonies concerning them. And these are the criteria laid down by theologians for the discernment of true from false ecstasies, visions and similar phenomena.

As regards the exercise of the above-mentioned virtues, we have already said enough to dispense us from enlarging upon them further. However, it is delightful to read that a command from one who had the right to her obedience was sufficient to awake her from her ecstasy. When Gemma was asked to explain this, she answered: 'Jesus said to me:

"You must go." And that ended matters.'

Concerning Gemma's humility we shall add one fact. A nun who disapproved of her conduct and of all the extraordinary things that happened to her, exhorted her openly to change her mode of life and think more seriously of her spiritual welfare. Had Gemma been less humble than she was, she would certainly have resented this advice. However, this is how she wrote of this matter to Father Germanus:

'There is a certain good religious here, who from time to time sends me a few affectionate words. She likes me very much, and from her words I gather that she also knows me well. Yes, Father, she knows me well. But you do not know me. You are mistaken, for the things that happen do not come from God, but from the Devil. Pray to Jesus for me; for light, for light, Father. It is all false devotion. I see it all only too well; it is all false devotion. Hide me away from the world, and shut me up where no one will see me. I want to get away from this sort of life and save my soul.'

WRITING DOWN AND CONTROL OF HER ECSTASIES

There is one thing for which we ought to be very grateful to Father Germanus, his instruction to the Giannini family to record what Gemma said while she was in ecstasy. Thus we have obtained a marvelous treasure of heavenly wisdom that bears comparison 'with all that is sublime and beautiful in the writings of the Saints, with the colloquies of Saint Augustine, the meditations of Saint Bernard and Saint Anselm, the mystical treatises of Saint John of the Cross and Saint Theresa of Jesus, and with the ecstasies of Saint Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi; everywhere and always there is great precision of ideas, the theology, whether dogmatic or mystical, being exact on all occasions. What is particularly admirable is the ingenuousness and childlike simplicity which is revealed in every phrase of the Ecstatic of Lucca.'

By this expedient, the truth of what Gemma, after an ecstasy, saw and heard, could be exactly established, for, being under an obligation to send an account of her ecstasies to her director, these accounts were compared with what had been taken down during the ecstasies, and were always found to agree perfectly.

With regard to this matter, it is well to quote a deposition of Mother Gemma Giannini, who was among the most assiduous in writing down these colloquies:

'As far as we could judge, Gemma was never aware of the fact that we used to keep an account of what she uttered in ecstasy, because we took care to be out of the room when she returned to her senses. When she was in ecstasy there was no excess of any kind, neither of tears nor of laughter. She never did anything extravagantly unusual, or the least unedifying. She was always natural, and even when she had

ecstasies that were more beautiful than usual, or saw apparitions that must have filled her with fervent enthusiasm, they had no observable effect upon her afterwards. During the ecstasies she was insensible and as it were dead to every impression, so that she gave no sign of feeling, even when as a test her head and forehead were pricked with pins. When the ecstasy was over she felt pain where she had been pricked, but she did not know why. After her ecstasies she was never so weak that she had to go to bed, and was able to undertake the household work as usual.'

The reader must pardon us for repeating what has been stated before, but we are most anxious to omit nothing that will help to place Gemma's ecstasies in their true light.

As mentioned before, these ecstasies began when Gemma was still in her own home, and reached their greatest development while she lived with the Gianninis. During her first stay at the Convent of the 'Mantellate' Nuns she had several. As she was not living within the enclosure but in the part reserved for outsiders, and was accustomed to spend most of her time in the Church, the nuns used to watch her from the grille in the hope of surprising her in ecstasy. On one occasion in order to assure themselves that she was in ecstasy, they had recourse to means that were certainly unusual. During the day from midday until one o'clock, Gemma used to perform her daily hour as guard to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and was as a rule in ecstasy. The nuns opened the door leading from their choir to the Church and seeing Gemma kneeling on one side of the altar of the Blessed Sacrament, in a posture that suggested that she was in ecstasy, they struck her over the shoulders with a long cane. 'We struck her as if striking a wall,' deposed Sister M. Julia of Saint Joseph. But Gemma did not seem to feel the blows or awake from her ecstasy.

ECSTATIC LEVITATION

Levitation is a phenomenon sometimes associated with ecstasy. When it occurs, the body seems no longer subject to the laws of gravity, and is raised into the air. Father Germanus assures us that Gemma manifested this phenomenon, although rarely. The centre of attraction for Gemma in the Giannini household was a devotional Crucifix, almost life-size, that hung in the dining-room. Her heart on fire with love for her divine Spouse, she often drew near to kiss His feet. Sometimes, however, she longed to kiss the adorable side also. But how was she to reach it? At that moment she was seized by a rapture and found herself raised above the earth, her arms around the Crucifix.

One day in September, 1901, something more remarkable occurred. Gemma was preparing the table for dinner, but her heart being more than usually on fire with love, she could not keep her eyes away from the Crucifix. At length she could hold out no longer, and from her heart a cry arose: 'O my Jesus, let me come to Thee; I am all on fire with thirst for Thy most precious Blood!' And behold, a marvel! Jesus detached an arm from the Cross and invited her to come to Him. She darted forward, and embraced her heavenly Spouse, and in His turn He embraced her; she placed her lips to that sacred side and drank copiously from that divine fountain, and all the while her feet were resting as if upon a cloud. Father Germanus learned these extraordinary facts from Gemma herself.'

VISIONS

Ecstasies of their nature include visions, and Gemma was abundantly favored with them and also with apparitions. 'It was enough to see her during these happy moments to come to the conclusion that she was in affectionate relations

with God,' Chevalier Matthew Giannini testified. Aunt Cecilia, who was so much in Gemma's confidence, declared that the visions that accompanied her ecstasies were for the most part of Jesus suffering with the Cross on His shoulders, but often they were of Jesus in the act of pointing to His Sacred Heart, or of Jesus as a beautiful child. There were also apparitions of the Blessed Virgin. Saint Gabriel, the Passionist, appeared to her frequently, and Saint Paul of the Cross on several occasions.

Her visions of her Guardian Angel were marked by an extraordinary familiarity. The Angels of Heaven were indeed on intimate terms with this Angel of earth. But it was her Guardian Angel who was nearly always visibly present. It is necessary to go back to Saint Frances of Rome, to Saint Rose of Lima, to Blessed Crescentia Hoss, to find examples like the extraordinary intimacy that existed between Gemma and her Angel. She said of Jesus one day: 'He makes my Angel always stay with me.' Her Guardian encouraged her, became her master in the spiritual life, and if she sometimes did not act with the perfection expected, he reproved her. Thus Gemma besought her Angel: 'If I am sometimes wicked, dear Angel, do not be angry with me, because I do want to please you.' She was allowed to see him, now floating in the air with unfolded wings and hands outstretched over her, or joined in an attitude of prayer; now on his knees beside her. They prayed together; they competed with one another as to who should be the first to utter a favorite ejaculation: Live, Jesus! Father Germanus declared that every time Gemma raised her eyes to her Angel, she was rapt in ecstasy, and that no matter how often she looked, even for the shortest space of time, the same phenomenon occurred.

The lessons Gemma learned from this heavenly master were many. Sometimes he told her to get pen and paper and to sit

at the table, and then standing close by her side, he dictated such maxims as these: 'Remember, my child, that whoever loves Jesus speaks little and suffers much. I command you, in the name of Jesus, never to give your opinion unless it is asked, never to hold to your opinion but to yield. When you have committed any fault, acknowledge it immediately, and do not wait until you are taxed with it. Remember to guard your eyes, for the eyes that are mortified will look upon the beauty of Heaven.'

The Guardian Angel was her guide and companion. Thus one day, when she had stayed too long in the Church, he came to warn her and accompany her home. It was her Angel who came to solace and help her after she had been beaten by the demons; it was he who blessed her when she was going to bed, who watched over her virginal sleep, who awakened her in the morning in time to receive Jesus in Holy Communion.'

But the following incident has an inimitable beauty all its own. One day at two o'clock Gemma arrived at the door of the Convent of the 'Mantellate' Nuns, and asked for the Mother Prioress, who on coming down to the parlour was surprised to see Gemma alone, this being contrary to the orders of Monsignor Volpi, who had said that she should be accompanied on her way to and from the convent. When the Mother Prioress reproved her, saying: 'Is this the way you are obedient?' Gemma answered: 'Do not scold me, Mother, because I am not alone.' On being asked, however, whom she had with her, she replied ingenuously: 'My Guardian Angel.' 'Let me see him,' said the Mother Prioress. Gemma, with incomparable artlessness, opened the door and made a sign as if inviting a person standing outside to enter. Then she said to the Mother Prioress: 'Behold him.'

Naturally, the nun could see nobody. However, she asked Gemma how he had accompanied her on the way, and she answered: 'He had his wings outstretched over my head, protecting me.' On principle Father Germanus considered this familiarity excessive, but in the end he gave in and wrote to her: 'May Jesus be always with you and your Angel always at your side.'

But very often other heavenly spirits joined with the Guardian Angel in visiting their angelic sister. Then the competition in repeating 'Viva Gesu' must have grown more intense, and ended, to use her own phrase, in all being rapt in Jesus, that is, in the loss of mind and heart in the immense sea of the Divinity.

MYSTICAL ARDOURS

We shall proceed with our account of the other marvels which God wrought in this angelic virgin of Lucca. The reader already knows that Gemma's heart, wounded by the Stigmata, often poured forth blood copiously. But there are other extraordinary things concerning her heart which call for admiration.

Gemma lived on her love for God. Every increase in this love, far from satisfying her ardent desires, did but inflame them the more. But she realized her own powerlessness. Thus she confessed: 'There are days when Jesus is very close to me, and makes Himself felt in my heart; then my poor little heart becomes excited and makes me suffer incredibly and then my thoughts flyaway to Heaven. If I had a heart large enough, where Jesus could remain at His ease, I should never feel this pain.' She would have liked to love Jesus more than did the very Seraphim, and in one of her ecstasies she was heard to say: 'Angels of Paradise, you are not the only ones whom Jesus has told to love Him; He has also told

me to love Him; you are not the only ones He loves; He has also told me that He loves me. O my heart, make more room, expand wide.'

Gemma's love was so vehement that it manifested itself externally. Her heart was like a furnace, so that one could not put a hand near it without feeling the unaccustomed heat. Even the flesh over her heart looked as if it had been scorched by a fire. This phenomenon, by no means unique in the history of Christian hagiography, has been attested to in the Processes.

There are other marvels mentioned by witnesses in the Processes. The love that burned within her made her heart throb so violently that the benches on which she sat or the bed on which she lay trembled, and even the bedclothes immediately over her heart. were affected by the vehement movement underneath. 'It seems to me that my heart will jump out of my breast,' she said; 'how I should like to have a hand there sometimes to hold it back!' However, Gemma did not appear to know that the hand that tried to press back her heart would feel itself repulsed. Aunt Cecilia often placed her hand over Gemma's heart, sometimes when trying to prevent a spitting of blood that occurred on these occasions. 'It seems to me,' she said, 'that there was a bellows under her ribs.' Gemma's heart was indeed small, as she had complained, and by its dilation, produced a curvature of three ribs, a prodigy the truth of which could be established by more than one person.

All these marvels. wrought in the heart of Gemma made her, as it had made Saint Paul of the Cross who also experienced them, burn with an unquenchable desire for God. Here are some of the outpourings of her heart to her director:

'O Father, my heart is so small that it wants to enlarge itself, but cannot find room; it would like, but I am little, Jesus is infinite. Listen: do you think that I suffered more when, as it seemed to me, I was suffering in my head, my hands, my feet and my whole body, or now when I am not suffering, yet suffering because I cannot suffer? Let me know. This morning at about ten o'clock, my heart was full of longing I felt that I was going out of myself. To the suffering of my heart there succeeded great pain in all my limbs; but worse than all is the sorrow I feel for my sins. Oh how great that sorrow is! If it was greater I could not survive, nor could I survive, it seems to me, the violent throbbing I experienced. My little heart cannot contain itself and has begun to cast up blood in great quantities.'

She wrote on another occasion:

'If Jesus continues to act as He does, I do not know what will happen. He is absenting Himself ever more and more, and I am looking for Him ever more and more, and He is leaving me always more alone and unable to do anything good. Then I exert myself, my desires grow warmer, and then that affair of the ribs happens, and I begin to spit blood. You will see what will happen. If Jesus continues to act in this way, and keeps going further away from me, I shall not be able to bear it and I shall die.'

In another letter she confided:

'For the past ten days or so, I have felt a mysterious fire in the region of my heart, and I do not understand what it means. At first I did not heed it because it was of little or no inconvenience to me. But today is the third day when it is so great that I cannot bear it.'

It would need ice to extinguish it. It is very annoying, for it prevents me from sleeping or eating. It is a mysterious fire that shows itself externally even, and the flesh is somewhat scorched. You understand, it is not a fire that torments me, but one that consumes me.'

And again she writes:

'Yesterday evening before going to supper, I said a few prayers, among which was this ejaculation: "Grant, O Lord, that from this frugal supper I may pass to the possession of infinite joy." I shut my eyes for a few minutes to think of it, and then I felt myself pushed towards Jesus, and my heart began to throb. And this always happens every time I think of Jesus, and particularly when it seems to me that Jesus is inviting me to receive Him, or when He says - and it seems to me that He often does say so - that He is coming to repose in my heart.'

OTHER MARVELS

But the inventory of the precious gifts bestowed by Jesus upon His chosen spouse is far from being complete. We shall mention a few more. Thus she sometimes perspired copiously, and no natural cause could be assigned for this phenomenon. The following fact was deposed by Cecilia Giannini:

'One morning we were at the "Rosa" and received Holy Communion. After a little we went home, and I found that she was wringing wet all over. I made her change her clothes, but after a while she was in the same condition. This happened several times. She was helping me with a little work, but she was nevertheless so very silent and unusually recollected that I knew that her thoughts were elsewhere, probably on the Holy Communion she had just received. All

the same, she was doing her work very carefully, without breaking anything. The second time it happened I scolded her, saying: "This is not perspiration; you have splashed water all over yourself." And I said this because I believed that she had carried up the water for the rooms. "I did not carry it up," she answered, "ask Zita." Zita was one of the servants. Gemma's words "ask Zita" were in reply to my question: "If you did not bring it up, who did?" Then she added: "Not to prove that I am right, but for your own satisfaction, send Basil to the 'Rosa' to look at the place where I was after Communion." (Basil was one of the workmen.) She said nothing more. I went myself and looked where she had been kneeling, and saw that the spot was very wet. I came back immediately, but I said nothing. It was Gemma who first spoke. "Do not go away," she said after a while, "because it must happen in your presence." "What must happen?" I asked. She did not answer. We were sitting side by side, working. Gemma went into ecstasy, and I watched her. She was in her accustomed attitude and began to perspire so freely that large drops fell down upon the floor from her hands and feet. After it was over I made her change her clothes. She did not want to do this, but sacrificed her will to obedience. This perspiration was similar to that which naturally comes out when one works hard. As far as I remember it was not Summer weather, and besides, she never perspired as we did. I never heard her make a remark about the weather being hot. She had these sweats on several occasions; in fact, very often. Father Germanus knew about them before I did, and told me that I was to see that she always changed her clothes after she had them.

It seems to me, but I do not remember and I may make a mistake, that these happened in 1902, and not throughout her life. I used to think that they were consequences of her great sorrow for her sins, for she used to say to me: "I feel such great contrition for my sins that at times I perspire."

Among the other gifts which God deigned to shower upon His Servant we must mention the sweet odour that was diffused by her person, an odor instilling a love of virtue in all who were fortunate enough to experience it. Signora Justina Giannini attests: 'A certain distinguished and very religious person named Carlo de Nobili visited me when I was ill. He said: "I am always more than delighted to come to this house, because I am conscious of such an indescribably pleasant odor when Gemma is around."'

That she was also favored by God with the gifts of prophecy and the discernment of hearts is easily deduced from the Processes. Thus when Signora Justina was so seriously ill that no hope was held out for her, Gemma declared that she would be cured, but that she would always be afflicted with a slight indisposition. She told her Aunt Elisa that Euphemia Giannini would be a Passionist nun. This was a long time before Euphemia entered the convent. Euphemia herself did not hear of the prophecy until she was a nun. When Monsignor Volpi was Vicar-Capitular of the Archdiocese of Lucca, and was working to establish a foundation of the Passionist nuns in that city, Gemma told him to make haste because he had not much time to spare. And indeed in a short time he was transferred to the See of Arezzo. She often predicted the arrival at the Gianninis' (mentioning the exact hour) of Monsignor Tei, or Father Germanus, or of their letters. She prophesied her own death, a long time before, about six years in fact, and indicated the circumstances that were to accompany it.

We cannot resist mentioning a prophecy that has been fulfilled only in our day. Once when she was doing her hour on guard before the Blessed Sacrament, the Infant Jesus appeared to her, and among other things said: 'Assure your confessor that it is Jesus who speaks to you; and that

through My operation within you, you will be a Saint, and work miracles, and be raised to the honors of the altars."

To a child as innocent and ingenuous as Gemma Jesus could safely reveal such secrets, without fear of exposing her to the danger of pride. However, there have been other Saints to whom a similar revelation was made: for instance, Saint Vincent Ferrer and Saint Benedict Joseph Labre.

SUPREME UNION

Thus Gemma's soul, great yet little, resting in the arms of her Divine Spouse, mounted the steps of the spiritual life, to the very summit. Father Germanus gives two long chapters of his biography to a detailed account of this journey to perfect union with God through unaccustomed ways.

Gemma herself was once heard to utter in ecstasy these burning words: 'O Jesus, must it be always "daughter"? Must it be nothing more? Yet there is something I should like, O Jesus! Yes, I mean it; but it would seem to be too much for me, O Jesus. Or shall I say what it is I desire? I desire, O Jesus, I desire to be Thy spouse. Yes, Thy spouse, oh Jesus!'

Jesus heard her prayer, and united Himself to her with the indissoluble bond of love. 'And,' says Father Germanus, 'these mystical espousals were not to be without pledges. Jesus revealed them to her as He had also revealed them to Saint Catherine, Saint Paul of the Cross and other Saints, when He appeared to her under the form of a beautiful Child held in the arms of His Mother who took a ring from His finger and placed it upon Gemma's.'

The reader must not think that because of these extraordinary favors Gemma was living in an ocean of spiritual delights. One must have forgotten all we have said up to the present, or be ignorant of the most elementary

notions of the spiritual life, to come to this conclusion. The truth is, the heartbreaking, yet resigned, lamentations of Gemma in ecstasy drew tears from the eyes of all who heard them. Jesus was in hiding, and her heart was bursting with desire for Him. 'Father, I am alone,' she wrote to her director on one of these occasions. I am abandoned, but as I desire suffering, no one can console me. Jesus is no longer with me. Tell Jesus that I am His and that I will be His always. If He avoids me, I will always follow Him. But I hope that He will come back, will He?' And on another occasion she wrote: 'Jesus does not want me, He rejects me, yet I will seek Him always.'

Towards the end of her life Jesus told Gemma of the greater spiritual progress she would make, and of the new sorrows still to be borne. This is what she wrote to her confessor: 'Monsignor, one morning after I received Holy Communion, it seemed to me that Jesus spoke these words: "Already your confessor must have perceived that I desire you to pass through all the grades of the mystical life. The first part of the way is now over, and soon we shall be at the end of that which is called the way of sorrow and love. Then the way of great sorrow will be entered upon, and finally the dark night of the soul will come, and this will be the second and last part of your life, and at the end of it, My child, I shall take you to Heaven."

TRANSPORTS OF LOVE - HER HEAVENLY MOTHER

Gemma loved the Queen of Heaven ardently. As the reader will remember, she took her as her Mother when her earthly mother died. It was on the advice, at least implied, of the latter that Gemma did so, for a little statue of Our Lady of Sorrows before which she had learned to say her prayers,

was her mother's last gift to her, and she brought it with her to the Gianninis' and treasured it until her death.

When Gemma was miraculously cured of her serious illness, she heard Jesus say: 'My child, to the graces you have received this morning, others still greater will be added. I shall always be with you. I shall be as a Father to you, and she will be your Mother,' and He indicated the little statue of Our Lady of Sorrows. But it was not then that she thought of taking the Blessed Virgin for her Mother. From her earliest years she used to invoke her as her 'Mom in Heaven,' her 'Mom in Paradise,' her 'dear Mom.' And in moments of deep sorrow when her soul was filled with grief, she had another title for her, 'Mater orphanorum,' and the realization of being alone in the world and of being unable to count upon any but Her love, filled Gemma's heart with an immense confidence in Her intercession. And the Blessed Virgin did indeed become a Mother to the orphan, and demonstrated in many ways Her great and tender affection for Her child.

To convey some idea of Gemma's love for the Blessed Virgin we shall quote some passages taken from her marvelous writings, as well as some of the outbursts that came spontaneously from her lips while she was in ecstasy.

'After Holy Communion a little while ago, Mom called me and said that today was her feastday. She was dressed differently. She was no longer in black, but in white, and she caressed me tenderly. She pitied me because of my sins, as was evident from the way she looked at me. And do you know what I do when I am before her, and before Jesus? I kneel down, and if it is Jesus I kiss His feet, but trembling as it were, and sometimes in spirit only, because when I suffer I cannot move; but if it is Mom I run to her and kiss her hands.'

'Tomorrow is the feast of the Blessed Virgin. You know I love her very much, this Mom. And if I do not love her enough, she ought to obtain for me a heart more on fire, and then bring me to Jesus in Heaven. I love Jesus and my Mom; I am always thinking of her, and I do not want to lose any opportunity of pleasing her and Jesus. If I am to live for a little while longer I desire to be always near them.'

'This morning after Holy Communion, I was thinking: "Oh how great must have been the Blessed Virgin's sorrow after Jesus was born, as she reflected that He would one day be crucified!" What must have been the agonies of her heart! How often she must have wept! And she never complained. Poor Mom! And when they crucified Him, her heart was pierced through and through with grief, because! know well that any harm that comes to a child in the presence of its parents, grieves the parents as much as the child. Therefore Mom was crucified together with Jesus. And yet she never complained. After these reflections I made the resolution not to complain about the way I have to live.'

'Father, here we are in the month of May. I am thinking of the great favors I have received from Mom during the first years of my life, and I am ashamed that I have repaid with such little love the heart and the hand that showered them upon me. What is worse, I have returned her goodness with sin and ingratitude. Yes, Father, how often I have poured out the ardent desires of my agitated heart before a picture of my Mother, and how often I have been consoled! But what were my thanks to her? Father, I can truly say that in the greatest trials of my life, I remember that though I have no longer a mother on earth, I have a much more compassionate one in Heaven. This is the time, Father, when the Mother of Jesus ought to make it clear that she is still my Mom. The month of May is for me the most beautiful month of the year, the month of graces.'

'Father, father, how wonderful it is to receive Holy Communion in company with my Mother of Paradise! I did so yesterday, the 8th of May. I had never received Holy Communion in her company before. Father, do you know in what consisted all the outpourings of my heart during those moments? In these words: "O Mom! Mom, how I love to call thee Mom! My heart, you see, exults just the same as it does when I think of Jesus." To which she replies: "You love to call me Mom, but I love to call thee child." These words she repeated at least three times during the day. It was like Heaven when I heard her speak these sweet words to me. Let us reflect together, Father. Is not the feast of my heavenly Mom the most beautiful of all the days of the year? On that day my soul is filled with deep peace and I forget the world and its storms. 'On that day even the wicked remember that we have a mother in Heaven, full of tender love for us and solicitous for our welfare, and that we are her children. Even those who do not see her with bodily eyes but only look upon a simple image of her, cannot help feeling in their hearts sentiments of love, gratitude and confidence. Yes, the feast of my Mom is for me a day of greater peace and of greater love, and for all, a day of sanctification.'

'Father, though I am resigned, yet how can I live without Jesus! If I could only please His Mother so that at least she would come instead of Jesus! Oh, if I could only become worthy to be her child! If you knew how many times this good mother turns away her eyes from my sins, how frequently she acts towards me as a loving Mom! If Jesus will persist in hiding Himself I must have my Mother; I want her at least to listen to me. Even if Jesus does not want me any more and I must live without Him, I cannot do without my Mother. Mom, my Mother, I love thee so much, but I don't know how to show thee that I love thee.'

'I want to tell you another thing. The thought of my Mother is so deep in my mind that it seems to me that I can see her weeping as she opens her arms to receive Jesus when He was taken down from the Cross. Poor Mother! And it seems to me that she looks at me and says: "It is you who have reduced Jesus to this state!" Jesus has left me because He can no longer put up with my indifference, and now my Mom reproves me. What is to be done? Mom, Mother of mercy, show all thy mercy towards me, and bring me to Jesus. What other consolation canst You afford me other than this than You obtains mercy for me from Jesus. Do it for me, Mom, please! Jesus will grant it, if You only ask. From thee I expect everything.'

'Father, isn't Mom wonderfully beautiful! In the past it seemed to me that I saw her often, only to desire all the more to see her again. Her beauty is so great that it cannot be described. The Eternal Father has crowned her With the crown of holy love. And if you saw how beautiful that crown of glory is! The base, being of the brightest gold, seems to shoot forth flames. There are precious gems in it, and these are all the virtues. And there are many pearls. She was crowned with the crown of wisdom, and adorned with every splendor. I cannot describe it. There was a special sign in her beautiful crown, which meant that she was the dispensatrix of the treasures of Paradise. O Father, oh my Father!'

'Mother, do You remember the day You didst ascend to Heaven and didst carry my heart away with thee? Keep it always up there with thee, for when I am near thee I am in possession of all things. Do You think that a child can get on without its Mother? O my Mother, I desire to be always near thee, I don't want you ever to go away again. Oh, take me with thee to Heaven! I cannot live without thee! Do You see, how You make me suffer? O Mom, if You art a Mother full of pity, why do You abandon thy child who loves thee? Without

thee who will listen to my prayers? Without thee I am poor and helpless. O my Mother, why do You leave me? O Queen of Heaven, who didst take from creatures the noblest part of their love, You have also snatched away my heart, and now that it has become heavenly and has ceased to be earthly because of thy embraces, You will not give it back to me; You art jealous of my love. Oh Mom, do not leave me; I cannot do without thee!

'I am thine, Mother Mary, I am thine! You had pity on my great sins. I am thy child; Jesus says so. Therefore, do I not also belong to Thee, Jesus? Think of me, Jesus! Do You not want me any more, O Jesus? Do not abandon me; help me in the hour of trial. O my Mother, what a favour I have received, for Jesus has given me to thee. Mom, come as Jesus used to come, nearly every day. Oh, I know how a mother acts towards her children, so treat me just like that. But who am I that I should deserve such favors? Yet You art my only hope; if You will not listen to me, must I give up hope? Listen, Jesus has given thee my soul, and I have offered thee my heart!'

'O my Mother, how my heart is filled with pity every time I see thee at the foot of the Cross! But do You know what my greatest sorrow is? It is because I cannot offer thee any comfort, and because I have been the cause of thy sorrow. If my little sufferings are of any consolation to thee, accept them, O my Mother, and tell Jesus to hide them in His Heart. Oh yes, Jesus will accept them, and will not despise them.'

The following account of two visions of the Blessed Virgin was sent by Gemma to her spiritual director:

'I was lying down on my bed but was not yet asleep, when I seemed to see a beautiful lady coming towards me. I called out to Aunt, but I do not know whether she came or not, for I was immediately rapt out of my senses and was no longer in

the world. My heavenly Mother was looking at me and smiling. She loves me very much, and told me that she had come to take my little bouquet (of virtues). Do you understand? But she found me so poor, so poor that she encouraged me to practise virtue, particularly humility and obedience. Then she spoke a few words I do not know the meaning of. "My child, you must become refined, perfect in spirit, and quickly." What happened to me, I don't know, but that word "quickly" caused such a violent movement in my heart, that my Mother placed her beautiful hand upon it. I could not speak, but interiorly I asked her for an answer; I opened my eyes and questioned her with them. "Tell the Father, that if he does not provide for you, I shall soon take you to Heaven quicker than he thinks, we shall be together." She left me with my soul in an ocean of joy. O Father, you know how the world appears after such experiences! I do not know whether you have experienced it. I besought her for a little health, and to allow me to live a little longer. She consented, saying: "Tell the Father that I grant you what you ask, but that if he does not provide for you, I shall retract my promise, and take you away with me."

This vision refers to Gemma's religious vocation, and to the proposed establishment of the Passionist nuns at Lucca. Gemma did recover her health, but the foundation of the Convent being delayed, she got sick again and died.

The second vision is, to use the words of a very devout writer, 'simply exquisite.' We shall describe it in Gemma's own words:

'Who ever would have imagined that my heavenly Mother would come to see me? I myself did not dare to expect it, because I believed my wicked conduct was too great an obstacle. But she had pity on me, and after I had been interiorly recollected for a little while, there happened what

often happens, I was rapt out of myself and then, I found myself, it seems to me, before our Lady of Sorrows. What an abundance of joy I then felt within my heart! Explain it who can! It appeared to me that after a few moments of great emotion, she took me on her lap, and making me lean my head upon her shoulder, held me in that position for some time. My heart was full of contentment; I felt I was in want of nothing. "Am I the only one you love?" she asked me from time to time. "Oh, no," I answered, "I love another person more than thee." "And who is it?" she said, pretending not to know. "It is somebody who is very dear to me, dearer than anything else in the world. I love this person so much that I would even give my life for Him this instant." "But tell me who he is?" she asked again. "If You wert here yesterday evening," I replied, "You wouldst have seen Him with me. But He does not come often enough. I go to Him every day, and I should go oftener, if I could. But do You know, Mom, why He acts like that? It is because He wants to see whether I shall still love Him when He is far away. But the farther He is away, the more my heart longs for Him." "Tell me who He is," she repeated. "No, I shall not tell thee His name. But He is beautiful and like unto thee, and His hair is the same color as Thine." And then it seemed to me that my Mother caressed me, saying: "But, my child, whom do you mean?" "Do You not understand?" I exclaimed. "I mean Jesus, I am speaking of Jesus," and I repeated it more earnestly. She smiled at me and pressing me to her, said: "Love Him indeed; love Him with all your heart; but love Him alone." "Never fear," I said to her, "no one in this world will ever share my affections; they belong to Jesus alone." She caressed me again, and I thought she kissed me on the forehead. Then I awoke, that is, I came out of the ecstasy, and I found myself stretched on the floor with the Crucifix near me.'

'YOU BELONG ENTIRELY TO ME'

Gemma's love for Jesus was directed in a singular way towards the Blessed Sacrament. We do not intend to repeat here what we have already said about this subject. It can be summed up in one phrase. The Eucharist, Holy Communion, was Gemma's life, and her adorations were for the most part one continual ecstasy. The fire of Divine Love enclosed in the Eucharist, darted out and touched her heart, burning her so deeply at times that she was compelled to run away from that Divine Presence. The other marvelous effects produced in Gemma by the reception of Holy Communion, we have also touched upon. During the period already referred to when she subsisted on Holy Communion alone, except for an occasional drink of water, that is, from Pentecost to the end of June, 1902, any food she took through obedience, was immediately thrown up again, often accompanied with blood. Nevertheless, Gemma enjoyed the very best health during this time. However, at the end of that month she heard Jesus say: 'From now on I shall no longer sustain you,' and from that hour the prodigy ceased. She began to eat again, even more than before, according to Cecilia Giannini. But, nevertheless, she commenced to waste away visibly from that time until her death.

Here we shall set down some of Gemma's transports of love towards Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament: 'O Jesus, my only good, I am full of hunger for the Bread of life; I am athirst for Thy most precious Blood.'

'I love a life of Faith, and I will repeat a thousand times that I prefer to receive Thee than to see Thee. But, tell me, O Lord, how am I to please Thee? Communicate to me Thy light, and Thy divine ardors.'

'How sweet a thing it is, O Jesus, to receive Thee in Holy Communion! What consolation there is enclosed within Thy heart! Let me dwell there, oh Jesus, my only treasure in Thy embrace I wish to die.'

'It is almost a fortunate thing for me that I was born a sinner, for the veins of my Jesus are always open, ready to pour out that most precious Blood.' 'It is possible that after receiving Thee, even once, all should not become enamored of Thee?'

'Yes, O Jesus, there are happy moments on earth. O Jesus, Paradise of Charity, prodigy of Love! I am full of confusion at the thought of such graces. I can almost say that You belong entirely to me.'

'I am often asked what I do during all the time I spend with Jesus, and I answer: "What do a poor person do when received by a generous rich man?"'

'Oh my Jesus, do You ask me what I desire? Life to revive me. First I should like to have Thee within my heart and to love Thee, and then to see Thee and possess Thee for ever. O infinite God, how do You show such liberality towards me? Do You know what gives me strength to live? It is the thought of receiving Thee in Holy Communion.'

'I realize that You have not given to me the fugitive riches of the world, but You have bestowed true riches upon me. You have nourished me with the Incarnate Word. What would have become of me, if I had not directed all my tender affections towards the Sacred Host?'

'One must learn to love. The school is the Supper Room, the Master is Jesus, and the Doctrine to be learned are His Flesh and Blood.'

'Every morning I receive Holy Communion; it is the only consolation I have. Notwithstanding that I am nothing, and have nothing to offer Jesus, nevertheless I go to Him. I feel in great need, Father, of being re-invigorated with that sweet Food which Jesus gives to me. The love that Jesus shows me every morning, touches my heart and awakens all its affections, and then in those heavenly moments I make a thousand promises. I tell Jesus that all my love will be directed towards Him alone, and that if I do give a little of it to any creature, it will only be in order to love Him the more and make Him loved the more.'

'Do you know what I want to thank Jesus for the most when I am in Paradise? For Holy Communion more than for anything else.'

'Father, Father, I cannot bear it any more! After Communion, no, I cannot bear to think of all that Jesus does for the least of His creatures, of how He manifests to me the splendours of His Heart in the prodigious abundance of His paternal love. o Father, if you also think of this you will not be able to bear the thought. And to think who I am! I acknowledge that I am indeed a vile creature and the fruit of sin. Yet Jesus is good, too good; He desires me to come to Him and speak with Him in all confidence.'

'Holy Communion is a happiness that can only be compared, it seems to me, to the joy of the Saints and Angels. These gaze upon the face of Jesus, and are certain of never sinning again, of never losing Him again, and I envy them these two things and should like to be with them. But otherwise I should have, if I was capable of it, a motive for exultation, because Jesus' comes to my heart every morning.'

'We have received Holy Communion. What a union! Two extremes meet; Jesus Who is all and Gemma who is nothing.'

What a mystery! Live Jesus!'

'Father, let me speak about Holy Communion. Are there souls who do not understand what the Eucharist really is? Is it possible that there are souls insensible to the divine urgings, to the mysterious ardent effusions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus? o Heart of Jesus, how can mankind refuse to consecrate to Thee all the beats of their hearts, all the blood of their veins! Oh Heart of Jesus, Heart of Love!'

'It is night, Father, but tomorrow is drawing near, when Jesus will possess me and I will possess Jesus. Has it been because of my merits that I have been so favored? No, Father; isn't that true? Oh Jesus, my God, the object of all my affections, how glad I should be to die after having received Thee! Yes, to die in the ecstasy of Holy Communion! Jesus, my only love, I am waiting for Thee; do You hasten! Forgive me, Father, for writing like this; I am rapt out of myself.'

'Yes, Jesus is sweetness itself, and all this sweetness is manifested in the Blessed Sacrament. But how can the Majesty of God bear the presence of a creature so vile? Yesterday when I went to visit Jesus exposed in the Blessed Sacrament I felt myself burn so much that I had to leave Him. I was burning all over; it even reached my face. I cannot understand, Father, how those who are so near Jesus, are not burnt to a cinder. Jesus is such an irresistible and loving Spouse, that I feel that is what would happen to me. If Jesus acts like that, He will soon be alone. Sometimes I complain to Him, saying: "If You do act thus towards all and desire to make all who come to Thee feel the warmth of Thy love, people will not be able to endure it, and then You will be left alone.'

'A few minutes ago I received Jesus. I know that I deserve to have to live with the devils, but instead I am surrounded

every morning by the Saints and Angels, and continuously and intimately united with Jesus! How good and merciful is not Jesus! What is there worth loving on earth, now that I possess Jesus? I live upon the earth, but it seems to me, like one who has lost his way, for never is the thought of Jesus absent from my mind.'

Nevertheless Gemma feared that in spite of the candor of her desires, she did not receive Holy Communion with the requisite dispositions, and that she did not obtain from its reception all the fruit she ought. 'Tell me, Mother,' she wrote to a religious, 'why notwithstanding the frequency of my Communions, I do not obtain the benefit from them which others do?' And to her spiritual director she wrote: 'Day and night Jesus remains shut up, out of love for us, in that poor ciborium, and all around Him there is silence and squalor; and then if in addition to this we also were to grieve Him, what a heart-rending thought.' And in her humility she said: 'I am so undeserving, that it will be necessary for me to make restitution for all the particles I have stolen and all that Blood!'

'How happy Jesus makes me! But I am full of confusion at the thought. What was it that induced Jesus to communicate Himself to us in such a beautiful and wonderful manner? Let us reflect:

Jesus, our food! Jesus, my food! At this moment there are many things I should like to say, but I cannot. I can only weep, saying again and again: "Jesus, my food!"'

'Holy Sacrament, welcome me, receive me, grant me a tiny place in the ciborium, for You art my peace, my rest. How can I hide my heart, oh Jesus, within Thy fire? Come, O Jesus, I open my heart to Thee; enkindle therein the fire of Thy divine love. You art a flame of fire, O Jesus, and You desire to

change my heart into a fire also. Open Thy heart to me, O Jesus, for I have opened mine to Thee; set my heart on fire, O Jesus, and consume it with Thy burning love. And You, the Lily of purity, the Fountain of all beauty, how is it that You dwell in the midst of such misery? You nourish me and sustain me, but how do I repay Thee? You do feed among the lilies, but there are no such flowers within my heart. Thy bed is of ebony, and Thy columns are of gold, and Thy stairways are carpeted with purple. But there are no such colors within my heart!'

'I WISH THAT MY HEART COULD BEAT ONLY FOR JESUS'

There were flowers indeed, and those colors, within Gemma's heart - a heart burnt up with love of God. For this is what first strikes the reader of her writings and ecstasies, her extraordinary love for Jesus. To use the words of Father Germanus, in his introduction to the first edition of her letters and ecstasies in 1909, Gemma's love was 'tender and animated, constant and generous, fruitful of holy desires and the most ardent affections.' The Holy Name enriches every phrase, but so natural is its use that the reader, far from being wearied, is, on the contrary, pleased. In the Epistles of that great lover of the Divine Master, Saint Paul the Apostle, one notices with admiration that the most Holy Name is used no fewer than four hundred and fifty times. In her letters Gemma mentions it one thousand and eighty-two times in her ecstasies.

We shall now quote some passages taken here and there from these sublime outpourings of her heart:

'How sweet and good Jesus is to me, in spite of my being so wicked! How shall I ever correspond with the mercy Jesus

shows me? What shall I give to Jesus in exchange for all the benefits He showers upon me?'

'It is true, is it not, Jesus, that love is the best exchange for Thy gifts? And even I can love Thee. But I do not love Thee because of Thy gifts to me. I love Thee because You art my Jesus, I love Thee because You alone art worthy of being loved. I love Thee because You art good, because You have promised, have sworn never to abandon me.'

'I love Thee because You art my benefactor, my preserver, because You do consume my soul, do make my soul divine. Because You art my Spouse, I seek Thee always, I seek Thy affection, Thy friendship, Thy glory.'

'You ask me how I should like to love Thee? With that purity with which the virgins loved Thee; with that fortitude with which the martyrs loved Thee. Yes, You know, O Jesus (but do I say it too often?), I want to love Thee as Thy holy Mother loved Thee.'

'I should like to possess the purity of the Angels, and even that of our Mother, most holy Mary.'

'Do You know what chastisement I fear to merit? It is that of being condemned not to love Thee any more, my Jesus.'

'Love demands love, and fire calls upon fire. Even from the depths of my unworthiness I love Thee, O my Jesus, and intensely. It would be impossible for me to think of Thee. I spend my days uttering burning aspirations of love.'

'But what do You call me? What do You say to me? I am Thy delight, O Jesus? I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus. You art the staff of my life, the flame of my heart, the apple of my eye.'

'See, O Jesus, if You had shown Thyself less lovable, if You had not made me understand the extent of Thy love for me, I should have loved Thee less. But You have made me love Thee, and now I cannot do without Thee.'

'What would happen to me if Jesus ceased to love me? I, not to love Jesus, and Jesus not to love me? But it is a thought that terrifies me, and I beseech Jesus to continue to love me, to think of me, even though I do not succeed in loving Him as I ought.'

'O dear Jesus, come to me, come! Do not be disgusted with my misery, for although it is great, Thy mercy is greater still. Come, and with Thy purity, make clean my heart; with Thy meekness, beat down my pride. Visit my conscience, and if there is anything that displeases Thee; root it out and destroy it. Until my heart is full of true and solid virtue, do not come to it, do not expose to insult the honor of Thy glory, the greatness of Thy Majesty. O my God, You who do lower Thyself to the vilest of Thy creatures, such as I am; repair the harm my sins have done, and raise me up, O Jesus! And then, come to me always, O Jesus.'

'I consider my soul as a high mountain with Jesus resting against it to prevent it from falling. Yes, it is indeed so! If Jesus did not sustain me I should fall. O my God, make haste that I die, and die of love for Jesus! Do You not see that my heart and my body are in the throes of an agony and that I am on fire? Do You not see that I am a victim of love and that I shall soon die of love? The world wearies me; I long for one thing only, love, love, love.'

'What do You say, O Jesus? That I am small that I am great! The smaller I feel, the more I feel I love Jesus. His love inebriates me, exhausting me ever more and more. I shall be alone with Jesus.'

'You art great, O Jesus, but notwithstanding Thy greatness, my soul shall succeed in making Thee greater.' (That is, by giving His Mercy an opportunity of triumphing.)

'O Jesus, I desire to please Thee, and what pleases Thee, pleases me. I long for Thee alone, and the accomplishment of Thy most holy Will.'

'What joy one experiences when one abandons oneself into the arms of Jesus! The faithful soul becomes His dearest child. He opens His arms to receive it, and presses it to His most Sacred Heart. Oh Jesus, I am in such great need of Thy love!'

'Jesus is an irresistible and loving Spouse. The Mercy of Jesus astonishes me. How could anyone not love Jesus with their whole heart and soul? How could anyone not desire to be entirely absorbed in Him and consumed by His holy love?'

'Jesus is truth, but the truth is not in me. Jesus is perfect, but I am most imperfect. Jesus is pure; I am so unclean that I am, as it were, wrapped round with uncleanness. Jesus is holiness itself, whereas I am the fruit of sin. Nevertheless, in spite of all this, I dare to go to Jesus.

'Allow me, O Jesus, to call Thee Father, for no one forgives my weaknesses and inconsiderateness as You do. You art an abyss of love, Jesus, but I am an abyss of iniquity.'

'O Jesus, why should I love Thee for Thy favors alone, and not for Thy Cross? But what singularity of love You have chosen for me! O Jesus, hasten to consume me with the same fire that consumed Thee.'

'I burn, O Jesus. What a great consolation for me it is to know that these flames are the flames of Thy love! O Jesus, I desire Thy forgiveness, not Thy consolations, which I do not

deserve. It will be enough for me, O Jesus, if You nourish me with Thy heavenly food. Let me plunge down deep into the abyss of Thy love, O Jesus!'

'O Jesus, could there be a sweeter thing in the world than to love Thee? Now that we are close to one another, so united, burn me, set me on fire! I want to love Thee intensely.'

'Here I am, O Jesus. Oh, when will You give me wings? O Jesus, what joy will be mine when I am no longer my own, but entirely Thine. Oh, what is happening to me? I don't know what is happening. All I know is that the earth is disappearing from view, that I am happy, that I am forgetting everything.'

'What peace, what quiet even though You hide Thyself! If You desire to go far away, O Jesus, let us go to the mountain, let us run. I burn with the same flames, I am bound with the same bonds. Even though You hide Thyself and provided You love me, I am happy, O Jesus. I should like all to say that Thy love has consumed me. O Love, O Love!'

'O my God, You say that to flyaway is love, then let us fly, let us fly!'

'Ah, I have found Thy dwelling-place, O Jesus! You dwell in the soul that You have created to Thy image, in the soul that seeks Thee, that loves Thee, desires Thee; not in the soul which prefers the things of earth to Thee! But, my Jesus, my soul is no fit place for Thy habitation. How do You stay in my heart, O Jesus? Yet, make it Thy dwelling-place for ever; O my Jesus, may we be never again separated! O my God, my Jesus, my Father, my Spouse, my sweetness, my consolation, the consolation of all mankind! O Love that sustains me! O Fire that burns without ever being extinguished, grant that my heart may be consumed in Thy flames!'

'I wish that my heart could beat only for Jesus; that the Name of Jesus could be the only word to cross my lips, that my pen could write naught else but the name of Jesus; that my eyes looked upon no other object than Jesus, and that my thoughts were centered on Jesus alone. I have often reflected whether there was on earth any object towards which I could direct my affections, and I found that there was none either in Heaven or on earth except my beloved Jesus.'

'Let us ask Jesus to grant us the riches of His pure love, so that we may breathe only for His love, live only for His love. May the reign of the love of Jesus be extended throughout the world.'

'Where am I? Who is near me? Without a fire I burn; without a chain I am bound; yes, I feel that I am bound to Jesus. I am being consumed with longing in the flames that give me life, and yet cause my death. I suffer; I live and I die ceaselessly. But I would not exchange my life for all the world. I should like to cry in every ear: "Love Jesus, love Him alone!" Father, to suffer is nothing, to burn in that sweet fire, is nothing, to die is nothing. What, therefore, can I give to Jesus?'

'O Jesus, why do You hide Thy lovely eyes? Let us come to an agreement. If You do hide Thy eyes, then do not deny me Thy friendship. Otherwise I should die. Do not depart from me even for a moment. O my heart, why are you not on fire with love for Jesus, why are you not completely consumed? O Jesus, do You know why I have not found in the world a love as sincere as Thine? It is because Thy love is immense. Jesus on earth, Jesus in life, Jesus in Heaven, that is what sustains me.'

'What is it I feel, O my God? Thine are the Saints, and the humble of heart, but not I, O Lord. Thine are the spirits and

the souls of the just, but not I, O Lord. They render Thee infinite praise and thanksgiving. But, O Jesus, even I, a vile and unworthy sinner, desire to love Thee, and with an unusual love. O Strength of my heart, help me! O Fire, give fire to my heart; O Jesus, give words to my mouth, that day and night I may meditate on Thy glory and love Thee continuously. Unclean are my lips, unclean my whole body. I have need of Thee to cleanse me from every stain. Sanctify me, O Jesus. The memory of Thee, and Thy sweetness, holds my soul for ever united to Thee. Grant that I may pass from this visible world, to the invisible things of Heaven!

'O love, infinite love! Strip me of this flesh, free me from this body, for I can bear no more. O love that delights yet ever torments me! When shall I be united to Thee, O Lord, to Thee Who do even in this world keep me so intimately united to Thee in the bonds of love. Grant, oh grant that I may die of love! What a happy death, O Lord, to die a victim of Thy love, a victim for Thee!'

As was truthfully written over her tomb, Gemma did indeed die a victim of divine love, for she was consumed by its flames rather than by the violence of her disease.

HER MISSION - A HOLOCAUST FOR SINNERS

To the words just recorded and as a complement to the glorious epitaph inscribed on the marble over the tomb of Blessed Gemma there should be added 'Virgo altare Christi,' words so often found in the Catacombs over the last resting-place of the Christian virgins. This wonderful title, by which the Fathers of the Church frequently honored these Christian Virgins, belongs also to Blessed Gemma. For her life was one long sacrifice, a sacrifice which, united to that of the Divine Martyr, became the fruitful cause of the salvation of many souls.'

This beneficent mission which occupied, one may say, every day of her short life was apparent to those amongst whom she lived, and they testified to it in the Processes for her Beatification. 'She acted as a missionary of good to all,' said Sister M. Agnes, Prioress of the 'Mantellate' Nuns at Lucca. 'It was one of Gemma's characteristics to pray for poor sinners,' declared Canon Andreuccetti, and Sister M. Julia of Saint Joseph attested that Gemma's life was devoted to the expiation of sin. Gemma's friend, Palmira Valentini, expressed herself with regard to this matter thus: 'Gemma was much afflicted by the thought of the sins which were being committed, and she often offered herself to God on behalf of sinners. This was a special characteristic of hers.' 'She would have liked to go throughout the world,' continued the Superior of the Sisters at Lucca, 'everywhere preaching the Faith of Jesus, and promoting the spread of His Kingdom by converting pagans, heretics and sinners.' 'She desired to propagate the Faith, and convert sinners,' said Marianna Bianchini, 'and for the latter she suffered willingly, and did penance.' Another witness, Signora Thecla Natali, confirms what has been mentioned above, and added: 'She strove to get others to do the same.' The Franciscan, Father Gentile Pardini, whose emphatic depositions we have often quoted in the course of this work, declared: 'The sins of mankind, and the insult these offences offered to Jesus, were an acute and continual source of suffering to Gemma, and she therefore prayed for sinners and did penance for them as far as she was able.' And he added: 'Her zeal for the glory of God was so great that she would have given her blood, all her blood, for the good of souls.'

VICTIM FOR SINNERS - VICTIM SOUL

Gemma did more than merely desire to give her blood for the salvation of souls; she actually gave it. The reader will

remember the copious blood she shed in her ecstasies when she participated in the sufferings of the Passion, her sweat of blood when she heard blasphemies. For a whole month during which she was praying for priests, she shed tears of blood. And all this blood was offered for the welfare of souls.

We should like to record here all the wonderful ecstasies in which she struggled with the Justice of God for the salvation of sinners, offering herself generously as a victim of expiation for their sins. 'What do You wish, oh Jesus?' She once was heard to say in ecstasy. 'Do You think that I am waiting until You ask me for my life? It is Thine. I have already offered it to Thee. Will You be pleased if I offer it to Thee again, as a victim in expiation for my sins and those of sinners? Act at once. My life is in Thy hands, it is Thine, it is Thine. If I had a hundred lives I should give every one of them to Thee, but I have only one! I am ready for everything. Does it seem to Thee that in asking for my life You art asking me to make a sacrifice? It is a favour You do bestow upon me.' 'Do grant my desire, I she prayed on another occasion. 'It is not befitting that You should suffer, but I am here, strike me. Think of sinners. Do You know who has forbidden me to think of sinners. The Devil. Think of poor sinners, O Jesus, I recommend them to Thee. Teach me what I should do in order to save them.'

As He had done before once for Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, Jesus opened His Heart for Gemma, and with the thought of sinners in her mind, she ran to it. 'What art You doing, O Jesus? After so many other things, do You now open Thy Heart for me? Oh, if only all sinners would come to Thy Heart. Come, sinners, do not fear! The sword of Justice will not reach you there. But, o Jesus, why is Thy Heart, the best and holiest of all hearts, so tormented?' The sight of the Sacred Heart so inflamed her with love that she exclaimed: 'Oh, how beautiful is Thy Heart! O Jesus, I wish that my voice

could be heard all over the world; I would urge all sinners to seek refuge in Thy Heart.' 'Do they make Thee weep, these poor sinners? O Jesus, do not abandon them. I am ready to do anything whatsoever. You didst die on a Cross; make me also die. They are all children of Thine, and if they are Thy children do not abandon them. You know I desire them all to be saved. If You do abandon them, then there is no longer any hope. Ought not I to suffer for them? Therefore be avenged on me. There are many sinners, but very few victims. O Jesus, why will You not pardon them this evening? I desire to be a victim for all sinners. Oh, tell me, O Jesus, that You desire all to be saved. What does Thy Mother say to Thee? I accept every kind of suffering that You send. If they offend Thee, be You revenged upon me. You didst die on the Cross also for them; wait for them, O Jesus! Grant my request, wait for them. They can be converted. We are all the children of the same Father; then why do You not save them? O Jesus, canst You really bear it any longer? Vent Thy wrath upon me. I want to be a victim for sinners; to live as a victim and to die as a victim.'

'O Jesus, whom ought I to pray for?' asked Gemma in another ecstasy. 'You Thyself, O Jesus, have recommended sinners to my prayers. Remember, O Jesus, that they are all the children of Thy Blood. Do You not suffer for their sakes? And I also, O Jesus, I suffer this evening, but gladly with Thee and near Thee, for when I am near Thee, suffering is almost nothing to me; but alone, no.'

Because Gemma's heart was in very truth full to overflowing with love for souls, and because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, it is not to be wondered at that the same ardent prayers were often on her lips. Her love for souls made her almost audacious. She wanted all souls to be saved, and Jesus must hear her. 'I am thinking of sinners; I want them all to be saved, all. I must think of sinners only.

You canst look after the others.' 'Mother mine, Mom, just one thing more. Jesus is displeased with sinners! Tell Him to revenge Himself upon me but not upon them.' 'I have told Thee, O Lord, that what You have suffered for me and for sinners is enough. Yes, it is enough. I shall push my shoulders under Thy Cross.' 'O Jesus, if You had made Thyself known to all Thy creatures as You have made Thyself known to me, there would not be so much sin.'

APOSTLE

Similar thoughts abound in her letters. 'Ask Jesus,' she wrote, 'to give me the grace to be able to win souls for Him through prayer and suffering.' 'What is sweeter than to be filled with the thought of Jesus, and to be before that Victim of love and sorrow - a Victim for my sins and for my salvation and the salvation of souls. Jesus will have compassion on me because He sees my heart. He knows its dispositions, how I am ready to do and suffer all things. He also knows the sorrow I feel at the thought of my ingratitude, and on seeing Him so unworthily treated.' 'The greatest torment, it seems to me, I have to endure is for His sake. I should willingly give every drop of my blood to please Him and to prevent sinners from offending Him.'

'If Jesus should demand the sacrifice of my life, I would offer it to Him immediately. If He should desire something else of me, I am ready. I shall be satisfied when I am a victim, provided that it be soon, so that I may make reparation for my innumerable sins and the sins of the whole world.'

God was pleased with the generous offer made by Blessed Gemma. Like Saint Catherine of Siena, she had placed herself before the mouth of Hell to prevent sinners from casting themselves into its flames, and Father Germanus, the sharer of all her secrets, could write of her: 'The number

of souls snatched from the Devil by this humble child will be known only in eternity.'

In her Autobiography, Saint Therese of Lisieux tells of the conversion of her first sinner, her 'firstborn,' a man named Pranzini who had been condemned to death for several crimes. His salvation was despaired of, but little Therese, little also in years, for she was only thirteen, determined to obtain his conversion. She asked Jesus for a sign that her prayers had been heard, and she received a sign. Just before being executed Pranzini seized the Crucifix which a priest was holding out to him, and kissed the Sacred Wounds three times. 'Ever since,' she wrote, 'my craving has grown stronger, and daily Jesus has whispered to me, as to the Samaritan woman: "Give Me to drink!" It was an interchange of love. Upon sinners I poured the Blood of Jesus; and I offered their souls, ransomed and cleansed by that Blood, to quench His thirst. But meanwhile my thirst for souls waxed and waxed; it was the most exquisite reward I could desire.'

We have already referred to a similar incident recorded of Gemma by Sister Julia Sestini, and it can be said of Gemma that the conversion of a man who had refused the Last Sacraments, after she and her school companions had offered prayers on his behalf, increased her mysterious thirst for souls, as it had increased Saint Therese's. Besides, there is no lack of depositions concerning her zeal for souls during her early years. Thus Sister Julia Sestini attested: 'Gemma suffered because sin was committed. I remember that when she was only a small child, she used to grieve if one of her companions acted wrongly. She often prayed for sinners and offered for them the mortifications she used to perform.' But there was one sin in particular that afflicted her very much, and that was blasphemy. According to Elisa Galgani, on hearing anyone blaspheme, Gemma used to exclaim immediately: 'My Jesus mercy! Let us pray for that person's

soul.' This statement refers to the time when Gemma lived at Camaione. Her cousin, Luigi Bartelloni, also deposed concerning this period of her life: 'She suffered much because of sin, and because of blasphemy especially.'

The reader will remember the conversion of the water-carrier, and her struggle with Divine Justice while she was in ecstasy on the occasion of her first meeting with Father Germanus. There were many such incidents in her life. The Devil was filled with rage at seeing so many souls snatched from his grasp. He warned her that if she continued to interest herself in souls she would pay dearly for it. She did pay dearly for these victories over the Powers of Darkness, as the reader knows already.

HER ZEAL FOR SOULS INSPIRES HER TO GREATER SACRIFICES

Having chosen her for this mission, her Divine Master continued to inspire Gemma to sacrifice herself more and more for souls. It need not be said these inspirations had more influence over her than the threats of the Devil. She wrote to Monsignor Volpi:

'Tonight I told Jesus that I could bear no more sufferings, and He answered: "My child, I also can put up no longer with the wicked treatment I receive. There are so many terrible sins being committed just now that I cannot bear it any longer. But your suffering holds back the chastisement which My Father has prepared for so many poor sinners. And will you not suffer willingly?" I replied that I would, but that I was afraid that it would be too much for me. Jesus then said: "Do not fear! If I make you suffer I shall give you strength to bear it. O my child, do you not see that I am helping you more now than before? Look how the world is treating Me today! I am very displeased with those who offend Me." I besought

Jesus to have patience, and to vent His displeasure upon me by making me suffer as much as I could bear.'

Even her Guardian Angel often incited her to suffer on behalf of souls, by recalling to her mind the price Jesus paid for their salvation. Thus she wrote to Father Germanus:

'My Guardian Angel said to me yesterday, and repeated it again tonight very sadly: "If you were to see how much Jesus suffers! If you could see Him!" I then began to grieve, because on other occasions when He was suffering He came and told me, and I also suffered and it seemed to me that my suffering consoled Him a little. But He does not come now. I asked him (the Angel) why Jesus suffered more and he answered: "Because there are so many sins committed!"'

We shall quote here a long extract from a letter Gemma wrote to Father Germanus, which conveys a vivid idea of the ardor of her zeal for salvation of souls:

'If you knew, Father, how Jesus is afflicted sometimes! Oh, it is almost too much to bear to see Him like that, and then how many are there who compassionate Him? Very few, and Jesus is almost always alone. I suffer very much at seeing Jesus in the midst of such sorrow.

And what is to be done? Am I to see Him in that state and not help Him? At times I am filled with such an immense desire of suffering all the torments in the world that I cannot but try to find means of making myself suffer. About eight days ago, immediately after Holy Communion, three resolutions came spontaneously to my mind, and I made them at once to Jesus. If ever You desire, O my God, to take away my life as a chastisement for my innumerable sins, from this moment I offer it to Thee. I am ready to die when it shall please Thee. I offer my life to Thee, O my God - my life

united to the life of Jesus, and my sufferings with His, only I ask Thee to grant me perfect sorrow for my sins! and. You, O Jesus, have often made known to me that it is Thy Will that I should enter a Convent. Well, if You so desire, I am ready, but I should like to enter only to suffer for Thee, to love Thee, and to do penance for my great sins, Lord. O Jesus, do You wish me to continue to live as I am? May You be blessed! Perhaps You prefer me to live in the world, alone, abandoned, and despised by all? I am prepared. May Thy holy Will be accomplished in every way! I renew these three resolutions every morning and this pleases Jesus very much. He even reminds me of them if I forget.'

In the following chapter we shall see more particularly how much these resolutions, and especially the second resolution, were to cost Gemma.

On one occasion a sick man who would not go to the Sacraments was recommended to Gemma's prayers. The witness, Carola Puccinelli, who gave evidence concerning this sinner, also mentioned four ecstasies of Gemma at which she was present. She said:

'On 9 January 1900, at three o'clock, I saw this young girl on her knees in silence, with hands joined and eyes closed. Then she began: "My Jesus, before my heart offends Thee, allow me to die now that I hope I am in the state of grace. I have so much to say to Thee. That sinner, I do not want to see that sinner has grievously wounded Thy Heart. Remember that when You didst show Thyself to me crucified, I had grievously wounded Thy heart, and yet You didst have compassion on me. Have compassion also on this sinner. You do call me Thy sinner, call him also Thy sinner. That Cross, what is it, O Jesus? Thy Mother weeps and You do not answer me. Do not abandon him. Some people who have been good to me have recommended him to my prayers. I cannot

otherwise return their kindness to me. o my Jesus, I have nothing to give Thee; but art You going to leave me so soon?"

'On 12 January 1900, I again saw this young girl on her knees with her hands joined and her eyes closed. She said: "O Jesus, if I was not forbidden to do so by my confessor, I should give my hands and my feet to Thee. Take my heart; I can give that. Make me suffer what You will, give me that pain in my heart, O Jesus." Then it became difficult for her to breathe, and she fell down upon the floor. She was helped up again. She appeared to be suffering much. After a short silence she said: "O Jesus, You art suffering, and You do make me suffer also. Do not pay any attention to my body, which is the enemy of my salvation. O Jesus, that man. Didst You not say You had died for sinners? He is Thy child. Obstinate sinners, but then when, O dearest Mother, thy duty in Heaven is to intercede for sinners. O Jesus, art You going away?"

'On 26 January 1900, I saw this girl once more. Her eyes were closed and in her right hand there was a wound as if it had been pierced by a nail. Because until this time I had been doubtful about these facts, I was very much confused at the sight of the wound, and did not dare to look at the other hand. Blood was perspiring from her forehead, clear red blood. She was praying: "O Jesus, I offer myself to Thee for that sinner I have made myself responsible for. I have obtained all the necessary permissions, and therefore I can offer everything to Thee. Do with me whatever You desire. He is in my hands and I will hold myself responsible for him. I will see that he is saved. I do not ask for justice but for mercy. Yes, I have all the necessary permissions, and I can suffer. I can endure the Cross because it is Thy Cross; the sufferings will be Thine.

'On 20 July 1900 I saw her again, this time seated in an easy-chair. A sweat of blood was trickling down her face. She looked like an angel. She began to speak as if there was someone near her. "O Jesus," she said, "all is going well when one suffers to Jesus, I am bearing that sinner on my shoulders."' "

The obstinate sinner mentioned in the above ecstasies, for whom Gemma prayed for a year, was at length struck down with a serious illness. A very short time before his death, his heart softened and he consented to make his peace with God. The priest was sent for, and the man lived just long enough to receive absolution, and the benefit of the Jubilee indulgence. At the exact moment of his death, Gemma turned to Cecilia Giannini with whom she was out walking and exclaimed: "He is saved, he is saved!" Canon Andreuccetti who also deposed the above facts, adding, however, precise details about the persons concerned, declared that 'although he was in great pain he died resigned, and showing clear signs of piety and contrition.'

FOR SINNERS AND THOSE RECOMMENDED TO HER

The evidence of the Processes amply proves that Gemma very often had sinners in her hands and on her shoulders, as she used to say herself. Cecilia Giannini declared: 'She used to spend several nights in prayer for any sinner who was recommended to her. Sometimes when we were in the Church she asked me to pray for a soul who was then very near conversion, saying: "Let us recommend him to the Blessed Virgin because he has not the moral strength to give up his sin. He often makes good resolutions but has not the courage to put them into practice." It is not astonishing, therefore, that those who knew her should have frequently asked her prayers for the conversion of certain sinners with

whom they were acquainted. They could not have done anything more pleasing to her than this. Signora Justina Giannini herself attested that she recommended to Gemma's prayers a person very dear to her. Gemma promised to pray, and must indeed have continued her intercession in Heaven, because it was not until towards 1919, three years before Signora Giannini was cited to give evidence at the Apostolic Process then sitting at Pisa, that the person's conversion took place.

Mother Gemma of Jesus has left us the following intimate description of her friend's zeal for the salvation of souls: 'She had always at heart the glory of God and the spiritual good of her neighbor. Above all she prayed for sinners and offered herself as victim for their conversion. She prayed for the Church and for the return into its bosom of all heretics and schismatics. When the Passionist Fathers were giving missions, she redoubled her prayers for the conversion of sinners. The Servant of God did not limit herself to prayers and exhortations, but she practiced penance and indescribable mortifications for sinners and desired to experience in herself all the pains which Jesus suffered in His Passion.' To complete this deposition we shall again quote Cecilia Giannini. She deposed as follows: 'I heard her pray for the Pope, for priests, for the triumph of the Church, and I heard her offer herself as a victim to stave off the chastisements which the offences against God were calling down upon mankind.'

Gemma's heart was so on fire with zeal for souls that she was capable of enduring everything on their behalf. For instance, the following prayer was uttered by her while she was in ecstasy. The person mentioned was one from whom she had a right to expect entirely different treatment, for from being a friend he had changed into an implacable enemy, and his attitude to her was so offensive that Saint

Paul of the Cross had appeared to her to console her. 'O Jesus, I recommend to Thee my greatest enemy, the one who is most opposed to me. Guide him, be with him everywhere. If You do intend to lay Thy hand heavily upon him, do not do so. Lay it instead upon me. Be good to him, O Jesus. Do not abandon him; console him. It does not matter if I am in pain, but it is different with him. I recommend him to Thee now and always. O Jesus, I beseech Thee do not speak of it; help him, help him and console him. Give him in grace twice the measure of the evil - Do You understand, Jesus? - the evil he wished to do me. Will You be revenged on me? No, Jesus, with Thy help, I recommend him to Thee; think of him, guide him. And to show Thee that I love Thee, tomorrow morning I shall offer my Holy Communion for him. He is perhaps thinking of doing us evil, but instead we wish to do him good, ever so much good.' This is indeed heroic virtue. The Saints alone are capable of praying like that.

Here is another rare and sublime act of heroism. When Gemma used to go to the Convent of the 'Mantellate' Nuns, she heard that one of the religious frequently suffered greatly from terrible attacks of the Devil. What was she to do to help her? Gemma was not one to measure the extent of her generosity, or to hesitate at obstacles. She immediately decided to offer to take upon herself these diabolical attacks in order that the nun might be thereby released from suffering. Besides, she would have liked to undergo this kind of suffering on behalf of sinners. Having obtained Monsignor Volpi's permission, she asked Jesus to make the exchange. The nun was freed and Gemma was submitted to this new and awful suffering. There must have been many poor sinners who reaped spiritual profit from this extraordinary act of charity!

Gemma had long worked, suffered and prayed for the salvation of sinners when Jesus decided, as it were, to invest

her solemnly with this mission of converting souls, and thereby consecrating her as an acceptable victim to His most Sacred Heart. Of this, however, we shall treat in the chapter which follows, since it concerns what we shall relate in that place. But here we must state that all these new confidences on the part of her Divine Spouse did but excite her heart to greater efforts for the conversion of sinners. Only two days before her death, she obtained one such conversion. It was her last. She had prayed long and earnestly for him. During her last illness she said: 'I shall bear him on my shoulders, all this Lent, but then I shall leave him alone.' And indeed she did leave him alone on Holy Thursday, the day he was touched with sorrow for his sins and returned to God by a humble confession.

A MESSENGER OF GOOD

But Gemma's heart was great, immense. It was not satisfied with withdrawing poor erring sinners from the brink of perdition. She also desired to excite the good to practice virtue and to embrace the way of perfection. It is enough to say here that God made use of her as a messenger of good for His greater glory. She transmitted the orders of Jesus with that admirable simplicity which was such a characteristic of hers throughout her life, going immediately, without useless preamble, to the heart of what she had to say. Here are some instances.

A prelate once asked her whether his method. of government was sound. She answered: 'It is better to go somewhat slower, and do things more gently; otherwise you will please no one.' To her own spiritual director, she suggested: 'When you write, first ask Jesus about the matter, and do not write at random, as you often do. Forgive me for saying this, but I have wanted to say it to you for a long time.' Gemma herself was of great assistance to Father

Germanus in his direction of souls. Sometimes, indeed, she endeavored to dissuade him from a course of action he had decided upon, for instance, to abandon the direction of certain souls. On other occasions she advised him to have nothing to do with certain people. She did not like the word abandon. 'Jesus never uses it,' she wrote to Father Germanus. But when it was necessary to use it, how she suffered! 'Father, listen! Jesus desires that you no longer even think about that soul. When He told me this I was grieved very much. But then I also learned from Confrater Gabriel that that soul is entirely devoid of goodwill. Father, please, do not pay any attention to me especially with regard to this affair, for surely I must be mistaken about it. When I think of it!

What will become of that soul when, as Jesus wishes, it is abandoned by you? Do make another attempt before you give it up as hopeless. Will you?' Sometimes she gave him advice, not very often, however, and enlightened him concerning certain people who were under his direction. 'Father, that person is not as good as she ought to be; she does not give herself to Jesus as wholeheartedly as before. Father, is not this what happens to all who go back and do not continue to make progress?'

Father Germanus followed the counsels of his spiritual child and found them very advantageous. Nevertheless, in order to keep her perfectly humble, he made it appear that he paid no attention to them, although occasionally he actually asked her prayers for souls in whom he was interested. Here is a typical answer to such a request. 'Let us come to an agreement, Father. I shall think of N.N., and you will think of a poor soul who is in mortal sin. I am almost certain it will be converted, but I am praying that when it is, the Blessed Virgin may come for it immediately so that it may not fall back into the usual abyss of sin. Is it right for me to make

this prayer? I should like you to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass tomorrow morning for my sinner. Help me to save this soul, and I shall help you to know N.N., if such be the Will of God.'

Gemma helped Father Germanus in the direction of a Society established by him in Rome and in other places, called 'The School of Jesus,' the aim of which was to encourage and increase among its members the cultivation of the interior life, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. She not only joined this Society, but became a most zealous promoter of the work. But, nevertheless, she endeavored to keep very much in the background, fearing, in her shoulder, and turning round she saw someone clothed all in white. At the sight Gemma began to be afraid, but the vision said: 'I am Mary Theresa and I have come to thank you for all you have done for me. Continue to pray for a few days longer, and then I shall be eternally happy.' The vision disappeared and Gemma quietly went on with her reading.

One morning after Holy Communion, Gemma learned that the day of this soul's liberation had come and that when it would be freed that same night she would be given a sign. This is how she describes the incident in her diary: 'At about half-past one it seemed to me that the Blessed Virgin came to tell me that the hour was drawing near. After a little while, indeed, I thought I saw myself before Mary Theresa dressed as a Passionist, accompanied by her Guardian Angel and by Jesus. Oh, how changed she looked since the day I saw her first! Smiling she came towards me and told me how truly happy she was and that she was going to possess her Jesus for all eternity. She thanked me again. Several times she waved me good-bye with her hand, and then at about half-past two, together with Jesus and her Guardian Angel, she flew away to Heaven.' When she described these apparitions

to her confessor, Gemma told him. how much she had suffered at seeing the nun going off to Heaven. 'I have suffered very much, you know,' she said, 'I wanted to go there also.'

However, the work of this fervent apostle was not finished. She had yet to open the gates of Heaven to many souls, and thereby stud with precious pearls the crown of glory which was to encircle her brow for all eternity.

A GREAT WORK - HER VOCATION

Running through the last years of Blessed Gemma's life was an intense longing to enter a convent. Her unsuccessful attempt to become a Visitandine seemed but to increase her desire to become a nun, a desire that was far from being satisfied by her frequent, but short visits to the ' Mantellate' Convent.

When Gemma first met Father Gaetano during the mission at Lucca in 1899, she spoke of this desire. She had been commanded to do so by Saint Gabriel, who, according to the account she gave in a letter to Father Germanus, had appeared to her eight days before the beginning of this mission. 'Go to confession to the missionary,' the Saint had said to her, 'and tell him all you have hidden from your confessor until now; tell him also that you want to be a nun, but a nun living under a very severe rule of life.' These words only recalled to her mind what Jesus had already said to her when she was in the Visitation Convent: 'My child, a more austere rule is necessary for you.'

At the end of Gemma's account of her life, Father Gaetano told her about the Passionist nuns. She was delighted. The existence of this Congregation threw light on many things. She now began to understand the meaning of the attitude of

Saint Gabriel, of the way he addressed her when he came to her during her serious illness. Besides, during the mission Jesus Himself had asked her, as we have already stated, whether she liked the habit the missionaries wore, and had then told her that she would be a child of His Passion.

From that time all Gemma's thoughts of being a nun were directed towards the Congregation founded by Saint Paul of the Cross. This she admitted in a letter, part of which has been quoted already: 'From that moment,' she wrote, 'I could not help thinking of those words (that there was a Congregation of Passionist nuns) and of becoming one of them. I told my confessor. He was pleased and said that a very rigorous rule was what I needed. After this I had a great devotion to Confrater Gabriel. I began to pray to him and still pray to him that he may obtain for me the grace of becoming a nun soon.'

This angelic friendship between Saint Gabriel and Blessed Gemma grew closer every day, and it must be said that she began her life as a Passionist with him who called her his sister. According to the testimony of her Aunt Elisa she wore over her heart the emblem of the Passion which the followers of Saint Paul of the Cross wear externally upon their habits. In her daily life she followed as far as she was able the horarium used by the Passionist nuns. For instance, she rose at midnight to say the Divine Office. 'Gemma confided to me,' said her friend, Palmira Valentini, in a deposition in the Processes, 'that she had begun to say every day the Divine Office as said by the Passionists.' 'In order to prepare for the time when she would be a Passionist nun,' continues Palmira Valentini, 'and from a spirit of penance she went without stockings for a year even in winter.' At this time Cecilia Giannini used to accompany Gemma home every evening and on one occasion it was snowing and was very cold. There was also a high wind

blowing and Cecilia Giannini was astonished to see in a violent gust that Gemma was wearing no stockings. She reprimanded her and afterwards told Monsignor Volpi, and from then on Gemma always wore stockings.

LIKE UNTO SAINT ROSE OF VITERBO

If we are to believe the evidence of Elisa Galgani, and her evidence was confirmed in substance at least by several other witnesses, Gemma did not lose time in making formal application to be admitted into the Passionist Convent at Corneto (today called Tarquinia). But the answer was more than a mere refusal. It was couched in sharp and humiliating terms. Perhaps the nuns were aware of the serious illness she had had, and of the fact that there was consumption in her family. Gemma, however, was not in the least offended. She had asked for one favour and had obtained another, for she always looked upon humiliations as most desirable gifts. But her family did not do so, and in consequence Gemma felt the refusal keenly. Seeing her crying over it, her brother Anthony said: 'Do not be afraid! If you want to be a Saint you can be one even outside a convent.' She asked him whether he was angry with the Mother Superior who had sent the letter, adding: 'If she was in Purgatory and a prayer of mine could liberate her, I would willingly say it there and then.' To her Aunt Elisa she spoke a few words which were indeed a prophecy: 'Listen, Aunt! Alive, they do not want me, but after my death they will be glad to have me.' Many years previously, similar words were uttered by another holy girl who knocked in vain at the gate of a convent in Viterbo. Today she is the greatest glory of that convent and that city. It was the same with Blessed Gemma Galgani. In 1923, her holy body was taken from the cemetery at Lucca and laid to rest in the little chapel attached to the Convent of the Passionist nuns outside the Porta Elisa, where it is venerated

as a most precious treasure. The children of Saint Paul of the Cross honor Blessed Gemma as their Rose of Viterbo.

LONGINGS TO ENTER A CONVENT

The rebuff from the Mother Superior of the Tarquinia Convent did but strengthen Gemma's determination to become a Passionist. From this time on she seldom wrote a letter that did not contain some reference to this intention. 'Oh, how shall I be able to remain in this world where everything is so wearisome to me! It is still Gemma who writes; I am still in the world.' Again she pleaded: 'If you knew how unhappy I am in the world! Help me to become a Passionist. Put me away somewhere.'

Gemma desired to enter a convent in order that she might be able to suffer there, and in particular that she might be able to suffer with Jesus the torments of His most Sacred Passion. She did not realize that the mysterious things that were happening to her constituted an obstacle, especially in the eyes of those who did not understand them. 'Nearly every morning when He comes, Jesus makes me suffer,' she wrote on another occasion. 'This morning He said to me twice: "When do you want Me to increase your sufferings?" I did not answer. If I were in a convent I should have said: "O Jesus, do indeed increase my pains and sufferings, but increase also my strength." For if I were in a convent I should have had courage enough to say it. If I could suffer alone it would be all right. It is, indeed, only I who suffer, but there are many who are thereby disturbed. I do not know how to explain myself here. Do you understand me?'

She seized every opportunity to manifest her desire to be a nun. One by one several of her companions had entered the convent, leaving her in the world. This fact made her pour out her heart to Father Germanus: 'So many of my friends

have had, like me, a vocation to be a religious. They are all about my age, and have all been received. I alone remain. I cry when I think of it. I do not want to cry, you know, because my Guardian Angel does not wish it, but the tears come of their own accord. How I long to be in a convent also!'

She heard that the Passionist nuns were about to open a novitiate at Tarquinia, and she therefore wrote again: 'Is there any hope of a place being kept for the lowliest child of Saint Paul? I will be good, you know, and obedient always. Tell the nuns that I desire to serve them, that I will be their servant. You know I can work, I can sweep, wash the dishes, draw and carry water and also sew. I will be obedient to everyone, to all. Will you tell them to take me? Tell them that I suffer so much!'

Just as she asked Father Peter Paul Moreschini, the Provincial of the Passionists, the first time she met him to use his influence with the nuns at Tarquinia to have her accepted as a lay sister, so also she now sought the intercession of anyone whom she thought could help her. Thus she wrote the following letter to Monsignor Volpi:

'Monsignor, will you have pity on me, and find some means of putting me away from the world. I cannot live any longer like this. I cannot be with Jesus as much as I should like, do you believe me? I cannot bear it any more. Find a place for me somewhere. I will work, I will be the servant of the nuns. I will do anything, but do take me away from the world. Because I am not in a convent I cannot feel satisfied. There was one thing. I wanted to say to you this morning, but I did not venture to do so. Yesterday evening a Father who has just returned from Rome said that the Passionist nuns are going to open their novitiate in October. N. N. spoke about it this morning and has an idea of being there. What about

me? Father, would it please you if I went there by myself? I should like to go and ask them to take me even as a slave, for that would suit me best. Please give me this permission? They will take me, you know, for when I am there I shall go and see the Father, and if he uses his influence they will not send me away. You will let me go, won't you? Listen, the Father Provincial spoke to you about a lay sister who would be suitable for the Passionists, and you named one immediately. Do not forget me, for I am ready to go. Do send me, please? I will be able to do everything; rest assured of that. May I write immediately?"

The following letter written to a religious Superior on the same subject is certainly touching:

'Father, it is a long time now since I began to have a great desire to become a Passionist nun. If you knew how I suffer at seeing the time pass without any definite arrangement being made - I can bear it no longer; the thought of it wears me out. And do you know the most weighty reason given for my rejection? The first is because I am sick. But Jesus has promised that I shall be cured as soon as I enter the convent, and that nothing out of the ordinary will happen until after I have been professed. The other reason is that I have no parents, and am without a dowry. I have no one to help me. I have only one thing, an intense longing that keeps me always unsettled.'

This desire did not grow less keen. She spoke of it to everyone. She was hoping, no doubt, that she would at length find someone who would open the doors of the convent to her. To a friend in Rome, a pious lady, she wrote: 'On the last Friday of November, the Holy Face will be unveiled. I hope that you will be able to come, and if you think it is according to the Will of God, take me back with you and put me in a convent down there near you.' To

Annetta Giannini she had already written: 'I am always praying to Jesus that He will hasten the day so long and so much desired by me when I shall be able to enter a convent, because I feel that all will not be well with me in the world, and that I can never be really contented in it.' In a letter to her sister-in-law, Assunta, on the occasion of the latter's marriage, she mentions her vocation: 'I feel,' she wrote, 'that I can never be happy except in a convent.' She corresponded with a nun of Tarquinia, who afterwards became the Superior of the Passionist Convent at Lucca, and invariably she made the same appeal to her: 'Will you take me into the convent with you? I will be good; I will obey.' 'The Father knows how much I should like to be in the convent. Do tell him, please, to make haste, so that I may become a nun as soon as possible.' Ask the Father to grant my request. I really do feel ill at ease here in the world.'

Even when she was in ecstasy she was sometimes heard to pray for a vocation to be a nun. 'O Mary, my Mother, do let me enter a convent. After Jesus, that is my one desire!'

The repeated delays were a source of the keenest suffering to Gemma, so keen indeed that she besought Jesus thus: 'One thing I ask of Thee, if I am not to be a Passionist, take the desire away from my heart, for it is a thorn that pierces it!'

EFFORTS MADE IN VAIN

But Gemma was not the only one who was suffering because of these delays. Both Father Germanus and Monsignor Volpi felt deeply their inability to find a way out of the difficulties that beset Gemma's desire to enter a convent. All their efforts to get her accepted were in vain. Although Father Germanus was convinced of the reality of her vocation to the

religious life, the doors of the Passionist Convent at Tarquinia seemed definitely closed against her.

On her side Gemma wanted to be a Passionist nun, and nothing else. 'It was because of the austerity of their lives and because of their devotion to the Sacred Passion,' said Cecilia Giannini, 'that Gemma desired to be a Passionist nun.' And Sister M. Julia of Saint Joseph declared: 'Gemma wanted to be a Passionist; it was her ideal; it was indeed her proper vocation.' Concerning this subject Monsignor Volpi has left us the following deposition: 'The Servant of God several times expressed to me a desire to become a Passionist nun, and although there was talk of her entering other religious Orders, she always felt a special attraction for the Passionists.'

Efforts were indeed made to facilitate her entrance into several other religious Orders, and particularly the Zistine Sisters. But in spite of Gemma's affection for them, and in spite of the memories of the happy days she spent in their College at Lucca where she had made her first Holy Communion, the life led by the Sisters did not appeal to her, as it did not come up to her ideal. She longed for an austere and perfect cloistral life. Therefore when she came to know of Monsignor Volpi's intention in this regard, she wrote to him: 'Monsignor, please listen and then do as you think best. Why not try the Capuchin nuns, instead of the Zistine Sisters? But whatever happens I shall be content.' She went in person to visit the Capuchins, but her efforts also were in vain, and she returned home with one more thorn of disappointment in her heart. Monsignor Volpi asked Cecilia Giannini to make further efforts, but she refused.

According to Cecilia Giannini, Gemma had two paternal aunts among the Carmelites of Borgo at Mozzano, but nevertheless this fact did not secure her admission into their

convent. When Gemma heard what was being done in this direction, she showed no enthusiasm, remarking: 'I feel that I shall not enter there.'

There were greater and better founded hopes of her being accepted by the 'Mantellate' nuns, or as they were called, the 'Little Sisters' of Lucca. Gemma actually made a formal demand for admission during her first stay at their convent, and was presented to the Chapter by the Superior, and accepted. But the doctor who attended the Community had also attended Gemma during her illness and refused to give her the necessary certificate of good health, even going so far as to threaten to discontinue his services to the convent if they persisted in their intention of receiving her. Here is the deposition made concerning this matter by Sister M. Agnes, who was the Superior of the Convent at that time:

'Gemma went a bout, even though it was a rainy day, looking for a doctor who would give her a certificate of health, in order to be able to join us, our own doctor, by name Gianni, having refused to give one, saying that she was not healthy enough to enter. At last she found a doctor who gave her the desired certificate, and joyous and happy she brought it to me. Then I sent Gemma herself to show the certificate to Monsignor Volpi. He said: "My child, this is of no use; you must have a certificate from the Convent doctor, otherwise you will not be allowed to enter." Gemma, much grieved, returned to the Convent, saying: "Jesus has told me that if I enter a convent I shall live until I am fifty, but that if I do not He will take me when I am twenty-five." And as a matter of fact, she died at twenty-five years of age.'

Doctor Gianni was not so opposed to Gemma's religious vocation as may at first appear. According to Elisa Galgani his intention was to prevent her from entering that

particular convent because in his opinion it would not be suitable for her as it was situated in a damp place.

Further attempts were made later on to have Gemma received in this convent, but they all came to nothing. Sister M. Julia once asked her whether she would like to enter the convent she was in, and she answered: 'Yes, indeed I would, but as Jesus wants me to become a Passionist I should have to leave.' However, when she saw that the difficulties in the way of her being a Passionist were increasing instead of diminishing, she showed herself more disposed to be a nun in that convent, and when it was pointed out to her that it was not her proper vocation, she answered: 'It is better than nothing!'

To understand Gemma's words clearly, it must be remembered that she was convinced that she would one day be a Passionist. On the other hand, Monsignor Volpi, seeing that no conclusion was being reached with regard to her entrance among the Passionist nuns, and desiring to place her in an enclosed convent, yet realizing how determined she was to become a Passionist, said to her: 'My child, if you pay any more attention to Father Germanus, you will never become a religious.' These words supply the key to the right understanding of many interesting details in the life of Blessed Gemma Galgani.

PROJECTS OF A FOUNDATION OF PASSIONIST NUNS IN LUCCA

At this time there was talk of a foundation of the Passionist nuns being made at Lucca, and this helped to rouse new hope in Gemma's breast that if not at Tarquinia, then at least at Lucca she would be able to put on the black habit of the Passion. And, to increase this hope, she had certain supernatural assurances. She wrote to Father Germanus:

'One day I heard that it was intended to found a Convent of the Passionist nuns here in Lucca, and it struck me that I ought to ask Confrater Gabriel about the matter. It seemed to me that I saw him and asked him: "Will the foundation be made?" He answered me: "Sister mine, not for two years, but nevertheless I assure you that the Convent will be opened." "But shall I become a Passionist?" He answered: "Sister mine, yes, you will be a Passionist." "But where?" I asked him. "Oh, let me go to Corneto?" "But why do you want to go so far away?" he asked. "In order to forget everybody and to be forgotten by all." He did not reply, but blessed me and went away.'

Being now convinced that it was the Will of God that a Convent of the Passionist nuns should be established at Lucca, Gemma lost no opportunity to push forward the work. 'God wishes it,' she said, 'and what God wishes must surely be accomplished.' She encouraged and urged on all those whom she could influence in any way to hasten the foundation. But her slogan, 'God wishes it,' was not received with all the enthusiasm she desired, and she therefore set herself to meet the objections of the timid and the worldly prudent. She began to look out for a suitable site for the new convent and in company with Cecilia Giannini searched the whole of Lucca again and again. Besides this she wrote to Monsignor Volpi, to Father Germanus, to Father Paul Tei, to Mother Joseph and others. To Father Paul Tei in particular she wrote asking him to use his influence with Cardinal Martinelli. Mother Joseph had written to her saying that she believed that it was the Will of God that the foundation should be made, and Gemma, filled with joy, replied in March, 1901: 'It is true. Jesus does indeed wish it, and He will soon give you this consolation. A great number of holy souls are praying continually to Jesus that He may hasten the day, and among them is Signora Cecilia, who will not have peace of mind until the foundation is made.' And

Gemma made it known that there were eight thousand lire ready, and several buildings to be let or for sale.

'I DESIRE VICTIMS'

In the meantime, in order to increase her enthusiasm for a work that would be such a powerful means of promoting His glory, Jesus confided to Gemma the sorrows of His Divine Heart and the consolation He was expecting to derive from the new foundation. On 13 October 1901, she wrote to Father Germanus:

'Ten days ago, Jesus asked me this question: "Tell Me, My child, do you love Me very much?" Oh, Father, how could I answer except with the palpitation of my heart. "And if you love Me," He added, "you will do whatever I wish?" My heart once more answered and manifested my readiness. "It is an important matter, My child. You will have to communicate important things to your director. He will give to My Heart the satisfaction that It craves for." Then it appeared to me that Jesus continued thus: "My child," He exclaimed with a sigh, "how much ingratitude and malice there is in the world! Sinners continue to live in their obstinacy. My Father will no longer bear with them. Vicious souls make no effort to overcome the desires of the flesh. Souls in affliction become downhearted and fall into despair. Fervent souls gradually become lukewarm. The ministers of My Sanctuary (and here Jesus paused, but after a little while went on) to them I have confided the continuation of the work of Redemption (again Jesus was silent) I give them light and strength continually, but what do they do! Those whom I have regarded with such predilection, whom I have loved as the apple of My "eye (Jesus stopped and sighed). From creatures I continually receive nothing but ingratitude and an indifference that grows greater every day, and no one sees the error of his ways. And all the time I am bestowing

graces and favors from Heaven upon creatures, light and life to the Church, strength to My Vicar, wisdom to whomsoever is bound to enlighten souls that are in darkness, constancy and fortitude to those souls who ought to follow Me, graces of every sort to all the just, and even to sinners who are lost in the black night of their sin. To these latter especially I give light and I manifest to them the tenderness of My Heart so that they may be converted, but alas, about the new convent, but he was full of regret because no one down there is even thinking of it as yet. Only one year remains, and yet no start has been made.'

On other occasions Saint Gabriel appeared in order to give her minute and important particulars concerning the foundation, which she afterwards passed on to Father Germanus, thus:

'One day while I was praying, I was rapt out of myself and I found myself before Confrater Gabriel, who asked me: "Gemma, have you nothing to say to me?" I had, indeed, many things to say, even on behalf of my confessor, as he wanted to know about this convent, who was to commence the work, who would finish it, and when this would happen. When I asked all these questions I saw several people before me, and Confrater Gabriel pointed them out one by one. There were seven and I recognized three of them. "And who are those there?" I asked. "They will be Passionist nuns," he answered. "Tell your confessor that he himself will be the one who will set this great work on foot, that he is to be brave because the Devil is ready to make violent assaults. But what does that matter; let him go forward." He then remained silent. He afterwards pointed out a young lady, saying: "Look at her!" (and I looked) "She is the one who will give the finishing touch to this work. Do you know her?" "No," I replied. He told me her name and surname, and the city where she was born and brought up. Then he

disappeared. Nevertheless I was not quite persuaded about the truth of all this, but on more than three occasions the same thing happened, and on the last occasion he added: "At the end of two years, on a Friday, the work will be commenced."

To Mother Joseph she wrote: 'I shall pray for all your intentions one at a time, but I want you, on the contrary, after having made known to Jesus the great needs of my soul, to supplicate Him on behalf of the new Convent.' 'Signora Cecilia is going to write to the Father today to see if something cannot be done about the Convent. I am hoping for the best. Jesus wishes to hide me in some place.'

Gemma nevertheless felt the delay very much, especially on the part of Father Germanus, and she thus complained: 'If the good Father would only make up his mind to do what Jesus wants, everything would be all right. Let us pray that Jesus may give him the grace to overcome his hesitation and have courage to act.' On her own side she never ceased to pray for the foundation, and she was heard to say in ecstasy: 'O Jesus, my confessor says that I am to insist upon Thy establishing this Convent. He says I am not praying, but, O Jesus, You know how I feel, and how much I suffer. Do You hasten the day! You have said that You have a great desire to see this work finished, and it is You who have put this desire in my heart also; do You think of it.'

Notwithstanding the sacrifice which, as we shall see, she had to make of her vocation, Gemma continued to pray until the end of her life for the accomplishment of the great work. In the last letter she wrote to Father Germanus, or rather in a letter to the Blessed Virgin, which she sent to him, she said: 'I am praying for this work. O Mary, my Mother; see, so many victims are needed!'

We shall here relate some prophecies Gemma made concerning the establishment of the convent, though not in detail. It is sufficient to say that they were all completely fulfilled. They are taken from a letter she wrote to Father Francis of the Heart of Jesus, then Provincial Consultor of the Passionists:

'Jesus said to me almost smiling: "You must tell Father Francis that it is easier for Heaven and earth to fall than that My words should not be fulfilled completely. Tell him that as soon as he obtains his Provincial's permission he is to go to Rome and say on My behalf to the General Consultor" (who, according to Monsignor, is Father Ignatius), "that he is to speak to the Father General about this foundation, and that he must do so quickly. Let them be ready to commence the work when you yourself will give them the word. These Passionist Fathers, of whom the General Consultor must be the chief promoter, will collaborate with the Bishop, who must himself co-operate in the work. Do you understand?" He said to me. "In order that everyone may be convinced, tell him that it is I Who am speaking and that I desire all these things to be done notwithstanding the great war which the Devil is preparing to wage. The Devil will succeed in weakening the courage of some, but Father Ignatius will raise their hearts and infuse new strength.'

THE GREAT SACRIFICE

While all these things were happening, Cecilia Giannini wrote to the Mother: Superior of the Passionist Convent at Tarquinia, asking permission for herself, her nieces Annetta and Euphemia, and 'an orphan girl named Gemma Galgani,' to make a retreat.

But Gemma Galgani was already known in that convent. The nuns had been told by one who at the time was very much

opposed to Blessed Gemma that the extraordinary phenomena happening to her were attributable to hysteria, and he advised the nuns to have nothing to do with her. The Mother Superior, therefore, replied to Signora Cecilia's letter on 22 February 1902, granting permission to herself and her two nieces, but refusing it to Gemma. As if this was not enough, she wrote again a few days later, reiterating her refusal. When Gemma heard of this, she was greatly disappointed and wept. But she soon became resigned. 'It does not matter one way or the other,' she said.

The twelve days of Cecilia Giannini's absence Gemma spent in the 'Mantellate' Convent. During this time there was no manifestation of the usual phenomena. She had been put under the obligation of obedience not to allow anything extraordinary to happen. Nevertheless her stay at the convent was wonderfully happy. When Cecilia Giannini returned home and she had to leave the enclosure, she exclaimed: 'I am leaving Heaven to go to Hell,' and by this she meant to convey how much she disliked the world. In spite of this, however, she felt that it was not God's Will that she should remain in that convent, and in a letter to Father Germanus written while she was there, she confessed: 'It seems to me that this is not the place, because my heart is not satisfied.' Nevertheless Monsignor Volpi would have liked her to stay there altogether, and Gemma would have acquiesced in this arrangement. We quote a deposition of Cecilia Giannini: 'Both Father Germanus and I would have liked to place Gemma as a boarder with those Sisters, but it was impossible, because when everything was arranged and Father Germanus came to take her there, she began to run a temperature of over 104 degrees and to spit blood. "In conscience I cannot take her there now," he said. But Gemma had warned him before arrangements were made, not to make them, because Jesus did not desire it.'

From this moment, Gemma had to prepare herself to make the greatest sacrifice of her life - the sacrifice of her vocation. But she was not left without the encouragement of Heaven. One morning after Holy Communion she heard Jesus say: 'But, do you know, My child, that there is a life still happier than that of the Convent?' And on other occasions He repeated those words. As we have seen, when she asked Saint Gabriel whether she would be a Passionist at Tarquinia or in another place, she received no specific answer, only 'Sister mine, you will be a Passionist.' And when Jesus had confided to her the sorrows of His Heart, and had asked her to work for the foundation of the convent at Lucca in order to increase the number of willing victims, in answer to her question whether she would be among the number of those religious, He had only smiled and kept silence.

At length her divine Master spoke clearly. During midnight Mass of that year, when the priest was at the Offertory, she saw Jesus offering her as a victim to the Eternal Father, and then presenting her to the Blessed Virgin with these words: 'You must take care of this dear child because she is a fruit of My Passion.' It was her consecration as a Passionist. This was the only way she was to be a nun. She understood it all and made the sacrifice to God. She still prayed and worked for the foundation of the convent, but she put the thought of entering it out of her head. 'I no longer ask to enter the Convent,' she said, 'since a better convent awaits me.' To Cecilia Giannini who, on hearing her often speak of her approaching death, had remarked that this was not to be until she had been clothed in the black habit of the Passionist nuns, she replied: 'Jesus has the habit of a Passionist nun waiting for me at the gates of Paradise.'

The want of confidence and the indecision of those who were entrusted with the foundation of the convent grieved her; she knew that because of these things she had to die. But

she did not regret dying. The foundation had to be the result of her entire sacrifice, and to Cecilia Giannini she said: 'Let me die so that the Passionist Convent may be established later on.'

The foundation was indeed made. Today the convent arises, an oasis of delightful peace, outside the Porta Elisa of Lucca, near the venerated relics of her whom the religious love to salute as the true foundress of their home.

We shall not go into the details of this foundation.

We repeat, however, that all Gemma's prophecies in connection with it were fulfilled. The first Passionist nuns came to Tarquinia in Lucca on 16 March 1905, two years after Gemma's death. On 31 July 1908, on a Friday, and not long after the Beatification of Saint Gabriel, they entered into possession of their new convent. Pius X had already blessed the new foundation and had assigned as the special object of this community that which Jesus had asked of His faithful servant, namely: 'to offer themselves as victims to the Lord for the spiritual and temporal needs of the Church and of the Supreme Pontiff.' Blessed Gemma must indeed have rejoiced in Heaven at the fulfillment of her ardent desires.

A PASSIONIST IN SPIRIT

For the above reasons, therefore, the sons and daughters of Saint Paul of the Cross have always considered Blessed Gemma as a member of their Congregation. 'If, for reasons that were independent of her will, Gemma never wore the Passionist habit,' remarks Sister Gesualda, the Carmelite, 'she was nevertheless a true Passionist. She was a Passionist in soul and she had the Passionist spirit. The Order has made her its own. Her convent has been established for years and

is flourishing. Her prophecy has been fulfilled: "The Passionist nuns would not accept me; but I want to be one of them, and shall be with them when I am dead."

To supplement and clarify the meaning of the above words, it is necessary to add that Blessed Gemma was never clothed with the Passionist habit, notwithstanding the assurances she had from Heaven concerning her vocation and the new convent. The fact is that these assurances were made dependent upon the fulfillment of certain conditions, that is, upon the carrying out by certain persons of the work which God had designed them to do. But the conditions were not fulfilled and Gemma died without being clothed in the habit of the Passionists.

Pope Benedict XV, in the Decree introducing the cause of Blessed Gemma's Beatification, condensed in a few words the reasons why she belongs to the Congregation of the Passion. 'The pious virgin; Gemma Galgani,' he said, 'if not by habit and profession, undoubtedly by desire and affection, is rightly numbered among the religious children of Saint Paul of the Cross.' And Pope Pius XI, in promulgating the Decree concerning the heroicity of her virtues, cordially congratulated the sons and daughters of Saint Paul of the Cross upon their possessing this true gem of sanctity and upon the honor their Congregation would receive from the glorification of the Servant of God.

HER DEATH - A VICTIM OF EXPIATION

The life of Blessed Gemma was drawing to its close. Her whole existence for twenty-five years had been marked by the purest innocence and the most intense love of God. The program she had mapped out for herself, namely, to belong entirely to Jesus and to live for Him alone, had been faithfully and completely carried out.

On the feast of Pentecost, 1902, her soul seemed to have been set on fire with the flames of divine love. On that day there was an abundance of heavenly communications; she was more than usually recollected and it was noticed that she was breathing deeply. And in the midst of these ardors Jesus once more spoke to His faithful servant: 'I desire,' He said, 'a great expiation to be made, particularly for the sins and the sacrileges by which I am offended.' This new complaint of her divine Spouse moved Gemma's heart profoundly. What would she not have done for Him? Then, when He asked her whether she would undertake the expiation of these offences, she answered: 'O Jesus, You know I am most willing to do so. Yes, O Jesus, unburden Thyself upon me, and glorify Thyself in me, Thy miserable creature.'

Her offering was accepted. She became seriously ill. For two whole months her stomach could retain no food, her only nourishment during all this time being a little wine. Although it was obvious that she was suffering, no one understood what was the matter with her. Towards the end of June, she exclaimed: 'O Jesus, we have almost come to the end of Thy month. It has been entirely Thine!'

When Father Germanus heard what was happening to his spiritual child, he wrote before the month was out: 'In the Name of Jesus I command you that at the end of June you must return to your previous state of good health. Ask Jesus to do this because of holy obedience.' She obeyed and prayed. Jesus gave her to understand that out of regard for obedience and in order to show that He was indeed the Author of what was taking place in her, He would cure her, but only for a little while; that she would again fall sick and never get better. And so it happened.

Gemma was restored to her former health and strength, her usual color returning to her cheeks, but after three weeks or so she had a relapse. In September, following an apparition of the Blessed Virgin - an apparition spoken of in the course of this book - Gemma was once again restored to health. But it was only for a short time. She then became feverish and often coughed up blood from her lungs. But this innocent victim had something more to suffer than mere physical pain. To intensify her martyrdom and render her holocaust more pleasing in His sight, God withdrew all supernatural communications. Except for infrequent and momentary lights she was alone, without a ray of comfort. This was the great sorrow which Jesus had told her was to overshadow the end of her life.

Her dreadful sufferings soon reduced her to a skeleton. She was a prey to the most awful desolation of soul. It was sometimes thought that the end was near, and some of the household watched by her bedside all night. The doctors did not know what to do.

Cecilia Giannini wrote to Father Germanus asking him to come and comfort Gemma, and advise the family what they should do in the emergency. In October, Father Germanus came. Gemma wanted to get up to receive him, but he sent her a command that she was to remain in bed. 'Well; Gemma, what are we going to do?' he asked her as he sat by her bed. 'I am going away with Jesus, Father,' she answered, full of the liveliest joy. 'This time Jesus has made it quite clear. To Heaven, Father, to Jesus; with Jesus in Heaven!' 'But what about your sins?' objected Father Germanus. 'Jesus has thought of that,' she said. 'He will make me suffer so much in the short time I have to live, and so sanctify these sufferings by the merits of His Passion, that His divine Justice will be satisfied and He will then take me with Him to

Paradise.' 'But if I do not want you to die yet?' 'But if Jesus desires me to die, what then?'

They continued to talk together. They discussed the particulars of her death, the reception of the Last Sacraments, her burial, and the care of her body which she did not want any profane hands to touch, because of Jesus, she said. That evening Father Germanus once again heard her general confession.

On the following morning she received the Holy Viaticum. In spite of her fever she did not want to break her fast even with a drop of water. She sat up in bed, with assistance, dressed as a bride with a white veil on her head. She had spent the whole night in fervent preparation, her heart on fire with loving expectation. Father Germanus retired to a corner of the room to pray. The priest came with the Blessed Sacrament, but Gemma was already She was detached from everything and everybody, and in the end even from me, so that I began to think that she no longer cared whether I was near her or not. I therefore reprovved her, pointing out that she was ungrateful and that Jesus could not be pleased with her conduct. "Have I not done a little for you?" I concluded, "and Jesus rewards even a glass of water given in His Name. I have indeed made many a sacrifice for you. How is it that you utter not a word even though I am reproaching you with being ungrateful!" She answered: "But what are you saying? If there is one person in the world I have loved it is you." And with that she began to weep. "Do whatever seems best to you," I said. "I will not say another word about the matter." Gemma then continued - it was about a month or so before her death: "Nothing remains for me to do now except prepare for death, because I have made a sacrifice of everything." "Even of Father Germanus?" I asked. "Yes," she answered, "even of him."

If Cecilia Giannini could have read her adopted child's heart she would not have been disturbed by such fears. In writing to Father Germanus Gemma revealed her inmost thoughts. 'After taking away my earthly mother,' she confided to him, 'Jesus gave her back to me in the person of Aunt Cecilia. But now I am orphaned once more. Twice I have been an orphan on earth!'

When the question of her leaving the Gianninis was still under consideration, Father Paul Tei, who knew her well, when alone with her one day, said: 'You know, of course, that they want you to go away because there is a possibility of your having tuberculosis?' 'They are doing what is right,' she replied calmly, 'but all the same I have not got tuberculosis.' 'But Gemma,' Father Tei continued, 'you don't possess a penny, and what will you do when they put you out on the roadside?' She smiled: 'Father, is not God also on the roadside? Where God is, there are all things!' A sublime answer indeed, an answer that reveals Gemma's inimitable candor and her childlike abandonment in the loving arms of God.

SUFFERINGS UPON SUFFERINGS

Gemma's sickness continued its course with all the usual improvements and sudden relapses. Its acute crises were terrifying, and it was often necessary to give her oxygen to revive her. These sufferings increased in intensity as her death drew nearer. 'Her sufferings were unheard of.' Thus the Carmelite, Sister Gesualda, summarizes the various depositions made in the Processes. 'Her stomach could retain no food, not even a few drops of liquid, and the vomiting increased the pain in all her limbs, each of which suffered its own particular martyrdom. Her cough racked her whole body and she had great difficulty in breathing. Then the Lord took away her sight, and her voice grew so weak

that she could scarcely speak. Nevertheless, in spite of this, she never craved for any alleviation, or looked tired or sad. She never asked to be moved or raised in bed, even though she was lying in an uncomfortable position.' 'During the whole of her illness,' declared Mother Giannini, 'she asked for nothing, not even a drop of water.'

The Barbantine Sisters who had attended to her previously were asked to nurse her. This was done because, doubtless through some misunderstanding, she had been left alone a few nights when she had been in particular need of assistance. But she had not complained.

Gemma's room was a school of virtue. The Sisters never saw in her angelic face any trace of melancholy or of suffering. She was always calm and full of peace. Gemma and the Sisters once spent an entire night in talking about God. The Sisters were edified by her conversation, and on the other hand she was helped thereby to concentrate her mind on prayer. 'Let us say our prayers together,' she said to them. 'Let us occupy ourselves with nothing except Jesus alone!' Once at the height of her sufferings they asked her: 'If Jesus allowed you to choose between going to Heaven immediately and remaining here to suffer on the understanding that this latter would redound to His greater glory, what would you do?' She answered: 'It is better to suffer than to go to Heaven, if it is a question of suffering for Jesus, and promoting His glory.' The intensity of her pain, and more frequently, the violence of the assaults of the Devil, sometimes drew from her such complaints as this: 'O my Jesus, I can bear no more!' One of the Sisters at once remarked that with God's grace all things can be borne, and from that time whenever visitors said to her with compassion: 'Poor thing, I'm sure you cannot bear much more,' she immediately replied: 'Yes, I can bear a little more.' Even in the midst of her sufferings, she never changed. The

ingenuous simplicity that characterized her life was just as observable during her last days on earth.

A SCHOOL OF VIRTUE

A virtue that shone forth conspicuously in Gemma during her last illness, was her humility. One could not help being profoundly moved on hearing her ask Jesus and Mary to pardon her faults - she whose life on earth had been always so angelic. Her favorite ejaculatory prayer was: 'My Jesus, mercy!'

She prayed continually. A large Crucifix hung on the wall of her room, on her right hand, and in front of her bed a picture of the Blessed Virgin. When she was so exhausted that she could not speak, she still fixed her mind on God. One had only to see her face to realize how recollected she was. 'Monsignor,' she used to say, 'told me that when I could not pray with my lips I was to pray with my mind and heart, and I am doing so.'

Before she lost her sight she used to read Saint Alphonsus Liguori's "Preparation for Death". 'Are you not sorry you are going to die, Gemma?' she was sometimes asked by Cecilia Giannini. 'Oh, no,' she replied, 'I have no longer any attachment to anyone in this world.' When Cecilia knelt by the bedside, weeping, Gemma comforted her by saying: 'Aunt, I know your character; you worry too much; you are upset at seeing me suffer so much. Go away, go away far from me. Yes, go away and do not worry so much about me.' She had a good word for everyone, and was most grateful for any attention.

One day Gemma overheard Cecilia Giannini encouraging the Sisters by reminding them of the recompense they would receive. On hearing this, Gemma's face lit up. 'No, no,' she

said, 'leave that to me. I will think of the Sisters when I am with Jesus.'

Gemma was always happy with children. It was a case of like meeting like. While she was at the Gianninis' her benefactor's children were often with her, and when she had left they often asked to be taken to see her. And she always had a kind word and a smile for them and gave them the cakes and other dainties which had been sent to her by friends. She did not forget the 'Mantellate' nuns but sent them sweets and other delicacies. 'Whenever she received anything that was good to eat,' attested Sister Julia of Saint Joseph, 'she put it aside for Sister Mary. She knew that we nuns are poor.'

On the last day of her life, her sister Angiolina visited her and burst out crying. Gemma tried to comfort her. 'Don't cry, Angiolina', she said, 'there is nothing to be sorry about.' And then she asked Angiolina's pardon for the bad example she had given. It need not be said that this only grieved Angiolina all the more. She began to cry again and in her turn asked Gemma's pardon. 'Think no more about it,' said Gemma on saying goodbye, 'but try to be good.'

STRUGGLE WITH THE INFURIATED DEMONS

Gemma had to endure more than the sufferings caused by her sickness. During her last days the Devil attacked her violently. It would seem as if the powers of Hell were determined to make her pay dearly for all the victories she had gained over them. But these new assaults supplied her with new opportunities for further triumphs, and could end only in their greater confusion.

'From October until the day of her death,' declared Mother Gemma Giannini, 'she was tormented by the Devil, who

appeared to her under horrible forms. I often saw her bed shake, and the Servant of God like one who had fainted after a cruel beating. Sometimes after these diabolical attacks an indescribably fetid odor seemed to hang about the room.'

Gemma had been forewarned in ecstasy about the violent struggle she was to engage in with the powers of evil until her death. Cecilia Giannini has left us the following account: 'I heard her say one day in ecstasy: "Provided You art not glorified less, do what You desire with me, but give me strength and help me." A few days later I asked Gemma to explain these words. "What new thing is going to happen) Gemma?" I asked. "There will be a great struggle," she answered, "and it will be the biggest and the last."

Above all, the Devil sought to drive her to despair. 'So this is the reward for all your sacrifices in the service of God.' he suggested. And then there came before her imagination all the sad vicissitudes of her sorrowful life: the misfortunes that befell her family, the death of her father, the heartless creditors who even searched the children's pockets, her various painful sicknesses. She was tempted to think that she was a victim of delusion and hypocrisy. She began to fear that she had deceived everybody and that her life had been one long act of deception. This imagining filled her with fear and dread. She had to do something about it, so she wrote as well as she could in that trouble of mind, a confession of her whole life, and sent it to a priest with a request that he should come and give her absolution. He came and reassured her, and once more her soul was in peace. The Devil, however, did not give up the struggle. He redoubled his evil efforts and assailed her in other ways in the hope of making her angry or lose patience. But again he failed.

The temptation, however, which afflicted Gemma most cruelly was that which was directed against holy purity. The poor girl wrote in desperation to her far-away director: 'Father, this suffering is too much for me. Ask Jesus to change it into something else. From where you are send threats and exorcisms to drive away this beast, or send your Guardian Angel to hunt him out of this place.' • That beast,' declared Cecilia Giannini, 'almost killed Gemma. I came away from her room weeping. The brute was determined to have her and she had no protection. There were deafening blows; and the Devil assuming the form of ferocious animals tormented her. We used to help her by sprinkling holy water over the room. The commotion would cease then, only to begin again worse than ever.' The few drops of liquid she could retain in her stomach were made sickening and disgusting by the appearance in them of revolting and horrible insects. Filthy animals used to crawl about under the bed-clothes and a snake twisted itself round her from head to foot, trying to suffocate her. She asked that exorcisms should be employed, but when her request was not granted, she took it upon herself to make them: 'Evil spirits,' she commanded, 'I order you to go back to the place to which you belong, otherwise I shall accuse you before my God!' And then she would turn to the Blessed Virgin and in a voice that brought tears to the eyes of those who heard it, say: 'O Mother mine, I am in the hands of the Devil, who is tormenting me, who beats and scourges me. O Jesus, do not abandon me; O Mary, pray to Jesus for me!'

After each assault, her one thought was - had she offended Jesus. 'Where art You, O Jesus?' she would be heard to say repeatedly. 'Do not think that I want to do aught else but Thy holy Will. You know the truth, for You see my heart. O Jesus, if it be Thy good pleasure, give me a little respite! I feel that the struggle is almost too much for me. So please grant me a little rest, Jesus.' And Jesus heard her prayer, but

the moments of peace in which He and her Guardian Angel used to encourage her to persevere bravely, were short and rare. The storm would burst upon her more furiously than before. It was in this manner that Gemma, an innocent victim, passed her days and nights on her bed of sorrow.

But the abandonment had to be absolutely complete. It would seem that she was receiving too much assistance, too much strength from Holy Communion, and she had to make a sacrifice to Jesus even of this. Mother Gemma Giannini deposed:

'During her sickness she continued to receive Holy Communion every day. Because of the strain on her health we wished to prevent her from receiving, but Monsignor Volpi told us to allow her to go, saying that this was the only consolation that remained to her. Early in the morning I accompanied her to the Church of the Rose and afterwards came back home with her. A fortnight before her death, I took her to the Church as usual, but she was so weak that she was unable to go to the rails, and in consequence she did not receive Holy Communion that day, and this was a great sacrifice for her.'

It was to this Church also that Mother Gemma (then Euphemia Giannini) used to go with Gemma for the devotions of the month of March in honor of Saint Joseph. Gemma always had a special devotion to this patron of a happy death, and desired to make sure of his powerful assistance in the last moments of her life. Euphemia Giannini looked after Gemma with sisterly care, and in giving evidence in the Processes spoke with particular emotion of the following incident. During one of Gemma's violent attacks of coughing, that seemed to be on the point of suffocating her, Euphemia was standing by the bed

lovingly attentive. Gemma looked up at her lovingly to say: 'Learn, Euphemia, how Jesus desires to be loved.'

Gemma lived for a month at her new home, her last earthly dwelling-place. During this period Father Peter Paul Moreschini came to give her his blessing for the last time. She was overjoyed at seeing once more one whom God Himself had won to her cause and who had helped her so much in the days of trial. Father Peter Paul Moreschini gave the following deposition in the Processes regarding this visit: 'I heard her confession and knew that she was in a state of unmitigated suffering. The afflictions she was subjected to by the devils were unceasing day or night. Her illness, which according to the doctors was tuberculosis, had reduced her to an extremely weak condition, and I was persuaded that her death could not be far off.'

THE GATES OF HEAVEN OPENING TO RECEIVE HER

Gemma's death was indeed near. Heaven was about to open and welcome her within its gates for ever - that abode of the Blessed she had sighed after in life. "Make haste, Q Jesus; give me strength and make haste,' she was heard to exclaim in ecstasy, 'but shorten the time that is now so wearisome to me. Break this chain that binds me to earth and holds me back from Heaven. Let me come to Thee!' And again: 'O Paradise, in thee there will be neither night nor darkness, nor changes of things or time. O Paradise, where God of God and Light of Light dwells. It is illumined by the Sun of Justice and the Sacred Heart will fill it with divine brightness; for the consolation and joy of Heaven is indeed to contemplate God, the King of Kings. O Paradise, how long have I desired thee! Who can ever describe thee? A desire that never annoys, a plenty that one never grows weary of. What happiness, O Jesus, to dwell in Thy Paradise!'

On hearing these outpourings, Cecilia Giannini had asked Gemma: 'Why do you desire so greatly to go to Heaven? Have you not got Jesus here?' 'Yes,' she answered, 'but I do not see Him as He is in Heaven! One day I did see Him a little better, but my eyes were burnt by the sight.' 'And then I remembered,' continued Cecilia Giannini in her deposition, 'that I had once noticed that her eyes were sore and red, and that I had scolded her, saying: "Even your eyes are sore. There is not a bit of you healthy." But she kept silent, and on the following day her eyes were all right.'

Holy Week of 1903 came, and it was to be for Gemma indeed a week of the Passion. From the pains she suffered in her body, from the deathly pallor of her face and the anguish of abandonment she experienced in her soul, she seemed, according to the witnesses, an image of Christ dying on the Cross. A life of sorrow and martyrdom could have only such an end. She had longed and prayed to die on a great feast and her prayer was granted. She died on the Feast of Feasts, Easter.

On Wednesday of that Holy Week she was allowed to have even on her bed of sorrow a slight foretaste of the reward that awaited her. When she came out of an ecstasy, the Sister asked her if Jesus had consoled her. 'Oh,' she answered, 'if you were to have even a glimpse of what Jesus allowed me see, you would be overjoyed!' On that same day she received the Holy Viaticum. From March 23 she had been deprived of Jesus, who had always been her all, her very life. She desired to receive Him again on Holy Thursday. So as not to be disappointed she remained fasting in spite of the burning thirst she suffered. It was another heavenly scene. After receiving Holy Communion she was rapt into ecstasy and saw a crown of thorns. 'Before all Thy work will be accomplished,' she was heard to say, 'what a lot will have

to be suffered!' Afterwards she said to the Sister who was attending her: 'What a day tomorrow will be!'

'IT IS FINISHED'

The following day was Good Friday. At about ten o'clock Cecilia Giannini, tired out and sleepy, wished to go home and rest, but Gemma begged of her to remain. 'Do not go away,' she said, 'until I am nailed to the Cross. I have to be crucified with Jesus. Jesus has told me that His children ought to die crucified.' After some time she was rapt into a profound ecstasy. She stretched out her arms and remained in that position until half-past one. She did not speak, but one could read in her countenance the pain she was suffering and the love that filled her heart. She was in agony with Christ on the Cross.

The rest of that day and the following night was passed in continual suffering. At eight o'clock in the morning of Holy Saturday she received Extreme Unction, following with a singular devotion its administration. According to Monsignor Volpi and Elisa Galgani, she again received Holy Communion. In the meantime those who could console had retired. Her likeness to Jesus Crucified had to be complete. Neither her confessor nor her director was present. Only a few charitable women were near her, their sorrow increasing hers, as the sorrow of the women on Calvary increased the sufferings of the Savior. At first she had expressed a desire that a telegram should be sent to Father Germanus, but she let the matter rest there, having also made a sacrifice of his presence. The priests who had given her Holy Viaticum and administered Extreme Unction, she did not see again. 'A priest and a Christian is all I want,' she had said, or as Canon Andreuccetti records: 'A Crucifix and a priest is all I require when I am dying.' She had prayed to die without any comfort and her prayer was granted.

Even God withdrew His sensible Presence. Her mind was no longer illumined by His light, nor her heart warmed by the slightest consolation. And to crown her desolation the powers of Hell launched upon her its fiercest attacks.

Monsignor Volpi was summoned. He gave her absolution and tried to comfort her. Gemma would have liked him to use the exorcisms, for she saw the Devil near her under a horrible form and threatening her. The ravages of her disease had exhausted and emaciated her, but in spite of this, her body became so heavy a short time before her death that three people could not lift her in bed. When she was told this she remarked: 'It is not I who am so heavy.' Nevertheless, both Canon Andreuccetti and Monsignor Volpi refused to use the exorcisms. After the latter had given her his blessing he asked her if she was now content. She answered 'no'; for Gemma desired that he should use the exorcism to free her from the Devil, who was tormenting her. Monsignor Volpi then left to return no more.

When Gemma understood that on account of urgent business Monsignor Volpi could not remain with her, she took her Crucifix into her hands and, raising it up before her eyes, said: 'See, O Jesus, now indeed I can bear no more. If it be Thy Will, take me.' Then turning to a picture of the Blessed Virgin she prayed: 'Mother mine, I recommend my soul to thee; ask Jesus to have mercy on me.' She kissed the Crucifix and, placing it over her heart, her hands joined above it, she closed her eyes and remained motionless. Later on the parish priest, Canon Angeli, came and was with her to the end.

Let us reconstruct the scene. Gemma was raised up in bed with her head resting on the shoulder of Signora Justina Giannini. Euphemia Giannini was kneeling weeping, her head bent down over Gemma's right hand, which she was

holding in hers. The others were standing with their eyes fixed upon the dying girl.

When Cecilia Giannini saw that Gemma was sinking fast she hurried to call the other members of the family. 'Gemma is dying,' she announced. Everyone except the young children hastened to Gemma's bedside. At half-past one she took a turn for the worse and then without even a tear or a deep sigh, she ceased to breathe, a smile meanwhile illumining that face which, in spite of the ravages of sickness, had always remained beautiful. Thus Blessed Gemma died, as a child goes to sleep in its mother's arms. The parish priest, who was reciting the prayers of the Church for the dying, asked: 'Is she dead?'

Gemma was indeed dead! The parish priest began to intone the De Profundis. This scattered the last illusions, and everyone in the room burst out crying. But the Angels in Paradise must have sung a hymn of glory. Once again the words of Saint Paul the Apostle have been verified: 'If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him.'

Gemma's holy death took place on 11 April 1903.

THE APPROVAL OF HEAVEN - THE OPENING NOTES OF A SONG OF PRAISE AND VENERATION

After the first moments of sorrowful realization, Chevalier Giannini said to his children: 'Now that there is no longer any danger to your health, go and give Gemma a kiss.' And they approached the holy girl and kissed her. The younger children could not keep away from the room where she lay, and weeping they frequently called her by name. Elisa Galgani recounted with emotion how the youngest boy, Gabriellino, climbed on to the bed and strewed flowers over

Gemma's body. These demonstrations of affection and reverence were, as it were, the first notes of a canticle of recognition and devotion - a canticle that has increased in volume every day since.

In the time that elapsed before her burial, there was a continuous stream of people of every age and every social class, who came to venerate her holy remains. We use the word 'venerate' deliberately, for the news had spread everywhere throughout Lucca that a saint was dead - the saint who lived at Gianninis'. No one felt like praying for the repose of her soul, but thought rather of asking her intercession. Many declared that the sight alone of her body did them spiritual good.

Her body was prepared for the grave by the Barbantine Sisters. It had been Gemma's wish that no other eyes but theirs should look upon her and no other hands but theirs should touch her. She was clothed in a dark-colored habit. A Crucifix was placed on her breast and over her heart the emblem which Passionists wear on their habits - this being the suggestion of one who knew the intimate aspirations of her heart. A black veil was put on her head and over it a crown of flowers, and around her neck the Rosary which had belonged to her grandmother, and during the saying of which she had often been surprised by ecstasy. Her hands were joined over her breast after the manner in which she used to hold them during her sublime raptures. She looked angelic, with a smile playing, it seemed, around her lips. It was almost impossible to take one's eyes off her, and one felt instinctively compelled to kneel down.

People brought objects of devotion in order to touch her body with them, and the flowers that had been in contact with her brow were carried away as precious relics. There was an insistent request for things she had used, pieces of

clothing and such-like, and according to one of the Sisters, if demands for her hair had not been refused she would have been left without a hair on her head.

.Among those who came to visit Gemma's holy remains were many priests. Don Laurence Agrimonti declared that he felt like staying in that room the whole day praying, so spiritually minded it made him. The priest to whom Gemma had sent her written general confession and who had comforted her, also came. He went down on his knees and, in a voice full of emotion, cried out: 'Gemma, here at your feet is a great sinner; pray to Jesus for me!' Other priests touched her body with their Rosaries, and one who arrived late wanted to stop and pray in the room where she lay. 'How easy it is to pray here!' he said. 'Blessed is she who knew how to live like an angel and die like a saint!' A beautiful tribute this, in the mouth of a priest, to one who had prayed and suffered so much for priests.

Towards evening on Easter Sunday, Gemma's body was placed in a wooden coffin in which was also enclosed a sealed glass tube containing a parchment on which Canon Andreuccetti had written a short account of her life. The honor of carrying these holy remains rests with Joseph, the eldest of the Giannini family, another member of the Giannini household, and two Brothers.

A funeral, implying, as it does, great sorrow, does not harmonize well with the joy of Easter Day. However, all those who took part in Gemma's funeral were convinced that it was anything but a sorrowful ceremony. Her soul was already in Heaven enjoying the triumph of the Resurrection. She was buried in a special tomb and, on a marble slab above it, the following was inscribed in Latin:

'Gemma Galgani of Lucca, a most innocent virgin, who in her twenty-fifth year, consumed rather by the fire of Divine Love than by the violence of disease, flew into the arms of her Heavenly Spouse on Holy Saturday, the eleventh of April, 1903. Peace to thee, O sweet soul in company with the angels.'

This tomb held the precious remains of Gemma until 7 April 1908, when, with the permission of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities, they were transferred to a more suitable resting-place a few yards away. Her brother Guido, who was present at the exhumation, took away some flowers that had been placed in the coffin five years before and which appeared to be still fresh.

One may ask why there was so much enthusiasm concerning one who in life had been almost unknown, except to the Giannini family and a few others who used to visit the Giannini home. As the Holy Ghost has declared, humility precedes glory. On 11 April 1903, a new life began for Gemma Galgani, a life very different from the first. It was a sublime life of glory, and this enthusiasm constituted, as it were, but the opening notes of a song of praise and veneration.

A PRODIGY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The body of Blessed Gemma had not been long buried when it was suggested that it should be exhumed for an autopsy, in the hope of finding some extraordinary manifestation of sanctity, as happened with some of the Saints who were favored with gifts similar to hers. Some little time elapsed in obtaining the necessary sanctions and it was not until the fourteenth day after her death that her tomb was opened. Her body was found in exactly the same state as it had been when it was placed in the coffin, without the slightest sign of

decomposition. Her heart on being taken out was seen to be fresh, healthy-looking, flexible, reddish and full of blood. Its shape, however, was very unusual. It was somewhat flattened and stretched towards the sides so that it seemed broader than it was long.

There were present at the autopsy, according to Angelo Grotta and Father Germanus, two Sisters of Saint Camillus de Lellis; Chevalier Matthew Giannini, Joseph Giannini, the lawyer, and two doctors. 'It was I,' deposed Angelo Grotta, 'who operated by order of the doctors. In cutting into the middle of the heart I saw and felt a jet of blood spurt out and strike my hand. This blood had all the appearance of blood that comes from a living person, so that I marveled how there could be such living blood in a body that had been dead for a fortnight, and remembering besides the physical consumption of Gemma Galgani. Her heart appeared fresh, healthy looking, reddish and full of blood, just as if it were a living heart, and the blood in the ventricles and in the orifices was in the same state and flowed very freely.' The doctors themselves were astonished.

What is the meaning of this prodigy? It was the final trait of resemblance between Blessed Gemma Galgani and the Divine Martyr of Calvary. Saint John the Evangelist says: 'The soldiers therefore came, and they broke the legs of the first and of the other that was crucified with him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side; and immediately there came out blood and water. And he that saw it hath given testimony: and his testimony is true'.

NEW LIFE

The grave is the end of merely human fame. But the grave is only the beginning of the glory and the fame of the Saints. The fervor and enthusiasm which burst forth at the news of the death of Blessed Gemma Galgani will but increase as time goes on, for her tomb will become a centre of attraction for many hearts, and the goal of many pilgrimages. Tears will be shed in abundance there and flowers symbolizing love and gratitude will be scattered around the spot where her body lies. For the popular enthusiasm will be rewarded by Heaven by the gift of its choicest favors, and the notes of praise will continue to increase in volume. Blessed Gemma Galgani, like the Saint of Lisieux, is spending her Heaven in doing good upon earth.

The fame of Gemma's sanctity soon began to spread beyond the confines of Lucca. It may be said that it was she who made herself known and honored by the extraordinary graces she began to obtain for those who invoked her intercession. Four years after her death, in 1907, her spiritual director, Father Germanus, published for the first time the Life of the Servant of God. This biography, written by one who knew all the secrets of 'her soul, was a revelation to many. It was so well received that in two months the first edition was exhausted. Another edition was prepared containing more details, and in three months this was also sold out. From that time on, the number of those who declared themselves admirers and devout clients of Blessed Gemma Galgani increased daily, and with the extension of this devotion to her, the graces and prodigies with which God deigned to confirm the sanctity of His Servant also increased in number. In 1909 a collection of her letters and ecstasies was published and they were accorded an equally enthusiastic reception.

We quote here the following note from the third edition of *Pensieri di Gemma Galgani*, published in 1926. 'In order to

give a fairly accurate idea of the esteem in which Gemma is held by the people, it is enough to say that to satisfy the continual and repeated demands made by her admirers, the Printing Company of the Institute of Pius IX, not to speak of others, published at Rome in six years (1907-1912) 52,000 copies of her Life, 8,200 copies of *Lettere ed estasi*, besides a million small pictures of her. We shall not speak of the biography published in Naples by Doctor F. Donato, nor of the little work entitled Gemma Galgani, published by the Most Rev. Father Giovanardi, O.F.M., nor even of the short sketch of her life published by the Unione Biellese. In 1919 at Asti, Canon Laurence Gentile brought out still another biography. It must not be thought, however, that all these expressions of esteem and veneration were confined to Italy. The name of Gemma Galgani is known throughout Europe, particularly in Spain, France, England, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Switzerland. Her Life has been written in, or translated into, the languages of these countries and published again and again. From North and South America, from China and Japan, requests for pictures of Blessed Gemma and relics of her, reach the Postulator of her Cause, together with monetary offerings to cover the expenses of her Beatification. Her Life has been published also in Chinese and Japanese."

The circulation figures mentioned above need to be corrected. By 1929 71,000 copies of the Italian edition of the large biography had been sold, 87,000 copies of the smaller biography, and 46,000 copies of a still smaller sketch of her life. The collection of her letters and ecstasies had reached a fifth edition. Biographies of her had also appeared in Portuguese, Romanian and other languages.

We must not omit to mention the excellent Life which has gone through many editions, written with so much enthusiasm by her fellow-citizen and contemporary, Sister

Gesualda, a Carmelite of the Convent of Saint Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi at Florence, who had been the first to introduce Saint Therese of Lisieux to the Italian public by her translation of the *Histoire d'une dame*.

We shall not quote the long and enthusiastic references to Blessed Gemma in religious magazines and periodicals in Italy, Spain, France, England, Ireland, Holland and Germany, in North and South America. But we cannot omit to mention that the Civita Cattolica of 1922 did not hesitate to declare that Gemma Galgani, Therese of Lisieux and Bernadette Soubirous were three souls who lived like Angels in this valley of tears and who now were joined in a true apostolate.

The words of Cardinal Gasquet in his Introduction to the English translation of Father Germanus's biography, are well worth quoting:

'The story of Gemma Galgani will well repay perusal, for though it is merely the narrative of the life of a young girl born in our own times, it would, I think, be hard to find another such wonderful record of the dealings of Almighty God with a soul that had given itself entirely to the leadings of Divine Grace. To us who live in this most materialistic age of reason alone when the supernatural is being denied altogether, or held up to so called criticism is declared to be at best doubtful, it is useful and refreshing to have a book like this to read, which brings before us God very near indeed to our world. Personally I do not know of the life of any saint in any age of the Church which has brought home the supernatural to my mind more plainly and fully than Father Germanus's story of the life of Gemma Galgani.

'The life here printed I look upon as one of those helps which are given to us from time to time to assist our Faith, and to bring God nearer to our souls. It is quite impossible, or at

least it seems so to me, for any Catholic to read these pages without deep feelings of thankfulness that Almighty God has manifested Himself in such a truly marvelous way in the person of this saintly girl even in these our own days. Of course those who are not of the "Household of the Faith" will probably be skeptical about the whole account, and the words "fraud" and "hysteria" will be taken by many to explain satisfactorily the strange phenomena here recorded. Catholics who believe that God is ever with the world He has created may well thank Him for this manifestation of the power of His Grace in the Life of Gemma Galgani, which brings so clearly before us the fact that the supernatural world is as sure, as real, and as near to us as the world of which our senses tell us. God is indeed "wonderful in His Saints."

GEMMA IN HEAVEN - AN APOSTLE IN PAGAN LANDS

Father Louis Risso, a Missionary Apostolic in Honan, China, wrote:

'Here in China, devotion to Gemma continues to increase among the Missionaries. She is now well-known and loved throughout the Vicariate of Honan. Her Life is to be translated into Chinese and as soon as I hear that it is available, I shall send for a number of copies. I am convinced that it will do a great deal of good to these Christians by showing them what it means to be a Christian and how Jesus ought to be loved.'

And Father Dronart-De-Lezey, parish priest of the Church of Our Lady Immaculate at Tokyo and director of the work of Japanese scientific-religious publications, wrote:

'The Life of Gemma I published in Japanese has had a phenomenal success! Five thousand copies were sold in less than two months! Never before have I known books in Japanese to sell so well. This saint has immediately won the love and admiration of Japanese Catholics, and what fills me with astonishment, the love and admiration of many pagans also, and among them, students at the Imperial University.'

The above is confirmed by Father Eugene Sugita, Professor of French at that University, who wrote:

'What a marvelous life that saint led! A victim of love for God, the seraph of Lucca seems to have been sent into this world in order to oppose her candor and humility to the sophisms of modern philosophy, the invention of the Devil. The publication of her Life has done immense good to our Catholics. She has softened hardened hearts, strengthened the Faith in others, and converted many, and this she will continue to do. And what is more remarkable is that this biography, so full of mysticism, has succeeded in making many of our learned pagans reflect, tired as they are of what is merely earthly. Indeed, is not the appearance of such a saint as Gemma upon this earth but another proof of God's mercy towards poor humanity? As regards myself, I must say that after reading the Life of the admirable Servant of God, I began to invoke her and I have not ceased to do so. I have experienced visibly the effects of her benevolent intercession, and I shall be eternally grateful.'

A pagan, the headmaster of a High School in the city of Okegawa, Japan, expressed the astonishment of himself, the other teachers and the pupils, at the holy death of a young girl, fourteen years of age, named Toriuni Kei.

'There was only one Catholic girl at the High School,' he said, 'and she won the esteem and the affection of all by her

goodness and keen intelligence. But alas, she is dead. She died last July (1914) after a month's sickness during which she had read continually a book entitled Life of Gemma. She breathed her last clasping this book in her hands, whilst on her face there was a smile more beautiful, purer than any I have ever seen. We who more or less are without any religion, understood for the first time the admirable strength religious faith can inspire in a soul, and we attribute that to the reading of the Life of Gemma. We desire all our pupils to read it and therefore we ask you to forward us copies of that book.'

It would seem that, like Saint Therese of Lisieux, Gemma is pleased to use her heavenly influence more particularly on behalf of missionaries. She who read the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith with such eagerness, and who was so prompt in the payment of her subscription towards this work, delights to bestow special comfort and help to missionaries and those under their charge. 'When I am sad and downhearted,' wrote a missionary from China, 'I read a few pages of her Life and as if by enchantment I am comforted.' 'I make my spiritual reading from the Life of Gemma,' wrote another missionary from the same country. Similar enthusiastic expressions of esteem have come from Brazil, Canada, and other distant countries.'

THE REASON OF BLESSED GEMMA'S WORLD-WIDE POPULARITY

How can this truly universal devotion to Gemma Galgani be explained? Is it the result of judicious propaganda? This question can be answered in the words used by Father Henry Petitot, O.P., when explaining the world-wide popularity of Saint Therese of Lisieux. 'As to the imputation of excessive and unparalleled publicity having been organized around the person of Soeur Therese,' he says, 'if we go back to its

origin and follow it step by step, we shall soon be able to prove that it was evoked by the devotion of the faithful, and that it is, strictly speaking, a resultant and not an antecedent cause. The various editions, publications, pictures, pamphlets, were only printed to keep pace with the demand. They were not spread abroad, after the fashion of publishers, through the medium of the Press, by catalogues, or advertisements, or by notices intended to attract the attention of the indifferent.' To nothing else, therefore, must we attribute the popularity of Gemma Galgani except to the grace of God, who has thus arranged things for the good of humanity and the exaltation of His faithful Servant.

There is yet another matter that must be mentioned, namely, the salutary results which devotion to Blessed Gemma has effected and continues to effect among the faithful. We shall quote here a passage taken from the remarks appended to the Story of a Soul, omitting the name of Saint Therese of Lisieux and inserting that of Blessed Gemma. 'During her earthly career Blessed Gemma Galgani desired to remain forgotten and unknown. That longing amounted to a veritable passion. She wanted to annihilate herself, as it were, and give to her Creator all the praise and glory, offering Him, by the practice of all the virtues, the greatest proof of her love. Now God remembers and exclaims: "It is my turn now." And He repays the love of His Servant with a liberality that is indeed regal and divine!

We regret that it is impossible to give the reader any idea of the number and immensity of the graces and favors which have accompanied the diffusion of devotion to Blessed Gemma. It can be said that not a day of the thirty years since her death has passed without some manifestation of her power in Heaven. An account of many of the graces she has obtained for needy humanity has been published in the various editions of her Life. Many others have been

published from time to time in the religious magazines and periodicals under the direction of the Passionist Fathers throughout the world. In 1924, the Postulator of her Cause arranged for the publication almost every month of these graces and favors, under the title of '*Perle di cielo*' in the periodical *Il Divin Crocifisso*, edited at Pianezza, near Turin.

Thus things continued until the end of 1931 when a favorable opportunity was seized and the first number of a new periodical called *La Ven. Gemma Galgani e il Monastero delle Passioniste di Lucca* was published in Lucca. Its avowed object was to interest itself in whatever concerned Blessed Gemma. It also undertook to publish the accounts of the graces and favors which were attributed to her intercession. The accounts in the *Il Divin Crocifisso* from 1924 to 1926, were collected and published in a volume entitled *Voce divina e voce humana della tomba di Gemma Galgani*. Altogether about three hundred graces and favors have been described in this publication, and they are, one may say, of every kind. In the following chapter we shall give an account of the two miracles which have been approved of by the Church and accepted for her Beatification. The following quotation is taken from the above-mentioned volume:

'Gemma is invoked by the faithful in their material and spiritual needs; in all the ills to which poor human nature is heir; in imminent dangers, in troubles of soul, in anguish of mind; when there are debts to be paid, when one has to appear in court, when one has to pass difficult examinations, when an heir is needed in a family, when news of distant friends is desired, or their return sought; in financial embarrassments; when employment is wanted; for peace in families or reconciliation with enemies, for the conversion of souls who have lived far from God.

'The conversion of souls! Of all the graces attributed to the intercession of Gemma, the accounts of the conversion of sinners are the most touching. Blasphemers have been enabled to overcome their dreadful habits; the indifferent have been changed in mind and heart after years away from their religious duties; schismatics have returned to the bosom of the Catholic Church; and very many who read her Life written by Father Germanus, the Passionist, confess that they experience a strong impulse to embrace the way of perfection and sanctity.'

Among these graces there are some in which the supernatural is evident to anyone who reads the account of them, so evident indeed that reason and human science are at least constrained to confess that they are unable to supply an explanation. When there is question of the sudden and complete cure of inveterate wounds, of ulcers, of fractures of the base of the skull and other parts of the human body, of prolonged fevers, of tuberculosis bacteriologically diagnosed, of hernia, cysts, tumors, infectious diseases, fistulas, and of so many other sicknesses, after recourse has been had to Gemma, then anyone, who has not lost the Faith, is compelled to ascribe these cures to a supernatural cause.

HER TRIUMPH - FIRST STEP TOWARDS HER GLORIFICATION

The universal outburst of admiration and love which followed the death of Gemma, was naturally a prelude to her Beatification, the greatest honor after Canonization which the Church bestows upon her heroes. One could not ignore a phenomenon so universal and so spontaneous, especially when it was accompanied by miracles, the sign by which God sets His seal here on earth upon the sanctity of His Servants.

In October, 1907, at the Archiepiscopal Curia of Lucca, the ordinary and informative Processes on the form of sanctity, virtue and miracles in general of the Servant of God, Gemma Galgani, were begun, and being completed in 1910 were sent to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Among those that gave evidence in the Processes, there were, besides some authoritative members of the Giannini household, the three illustrious prelates who had every opportunity of knowing Gemma intimately, Monsignor John Volpi, at the time Bishop of Arezzo, Monsignor Peter Paul Moreschini, Archbishop of Camerino, and Monsignor Paul Tei, Bishop of Pesaro. Father Germanus, C.P., presented as evidence the biography he had written, at the same time pointing out the sources of the information he had used. These sources were the conversations he had had personally with the Servant of God; the letters written to him and to others; the accounts he had received from persons worthy of credence, priests, relatives, those among whom she had lived, especially the Gianninis who had been deputed to watch the holy girl day and night and thus observe and note down anything unusual that happened; the diaries Gemma had kept by order of her first directors; and the colloquies she had uttered in ecstasy and which had been faithfully taken down in writing by those who were present at them. Naturally Father Germanus did not suggest that he had been an eyewitness of everything he had written in his biography. 'There are very many things,' he nevertheless declared, 'of which I can say with the Evangelist Saint John: That which we have seen with our eyes and our hands have handled we declare unto you.'

The ordinary Processes being completed, her writings were next examined, and on 7 March 1918, a decree of the Sacred Congregation was issued in which it was declared that there being now no obstacle in the way, the Cause of the Beatification might be proceeded with. Finally, on 28 April

1920, a fortnight before the Canonization of Saint Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin and Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, two Saints who had such a great influence on her life, the Sovereign Pontiff Benedict XV signed the decree for the formal Introduction of her Cause to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. That same year, the Process 'De non culto' was approved, and in the following year a dispensation from the Process on the fame of sanctity was granted.

THE APOSTOLIC PROCESSES

The Apostolic Processes on the virtues commenced immediately at Pisa at the instance of the Sovereign Pontiff, and lasted from 20 January 1922, until December 20 of the same year. These Processes were suspended on the death of Benedict XV, but were opened again shortly after the election of Pius XI. Because the infirmity of some of the witnesses prevented their coming to Pisa, the Sacred Tribunal sat in Lucca for three weeks in May and October, and in the meantime the Holy See on its own account arranged for the interrogation of witnesses at Rome and Gaeta. Among the witnesses interrogated in these Processes - about fifty in number - there was one we must mention, Gemma's brother, Signor Guido Galgani, a chemist at Bagni di Saint Giuliano (Pisa), whose evidence was taken just in time, for he died a holy death three months later.

Upon their completion these Processes were brought to Rome, where they were discussed and examined. In 1926, both the ordinary and Apostolic Processes were declared valid, and on 28 June 1927, the Anti-preparatory Congregation on the virtues of Gemma Galgani was held at the home of Cardinal Gennaro Granito Pignatelli, Bishop of Albano, Ponent of the Cause. The Preparatory Congregation took place in the Vatican on 24 April 1928, and the General

Congregation in the presence of the Sovereign Pontiff, on 4 December of the same year.

Three years passed before the reading of the Decree concerning the heroicity of the virtues of Gemma Galgani, years that seemed so long to her admirers and devout clients, but which constitute one more proof of the prudence with which the Church proceeds to her decisions.

Finally, on 29 November 1931, the long-awaited Decree was read, and at its conclusion the Holy Father gave a magnificent discourse in which he drew attention to the lessons that were to be learned from the life of Gemma Galgani at a time when the entire world was in such a sad state of distress. This Decree, according to the present legislation of the Church, gave to Gemma Galgani the title of Venerable.

On 1 March 1932, the validity of the Processes instituted to investigate two miracles alleged to be worked by the Venerable Servant of God was recognized and accepted. On April 26, of the same year, the Anti-preparatory Congregation on the miracles mentioned was held. On 25 October 1932, the Preparatory Congregation, and on 31 January 1933, the General Congregation, took place. On the following Sunday, February 5, to the universal joy of the Catholic world, the Sovereign Pontiff Pius XI promulgated the Decree approving of the two miracles, namely, the instantaneous and perfect cure of Maria Menicucci, fifty years of age, who suffered from traumatic arthro-synovitis of the right knee, and the instantaneous and perfect cure of Father Ulysses Fabrizi, seventy-six years of age, who suffered from a serious varicose wound in the right tibia.

THE MIRACLES

Maria Menicucci of Vitorchiano related, in 1924, the history of her illness thus: 'It was in 1884 when I was about thirty-five years old that I began to experience slight pain and a feeling of heaviness in my right knee. At the same time I had difficulty in walking and developed a limp. These troubles grew worse the more I walked; at the same time I noticed that my knee had swollen. Gradually this swelling became more noticeable. The flesh above the knee was of normal color, but when I sometimes touched it, I felt pain in other places although I do not now remember where. The pain ceased when I was lying down, but increased when the knee was moved. Any movement of the knee was painful, and there was besides a certain rigidity in the knee itself. I noticed also a crackling sound in the knee when I moved it. These troubles were greater towards evening after I had used the knee, and appeared less in the morning after the night's repose.'

Notwithstanding the sufferings she endured Maria Menicucci did not visit a doctor or take any remedies until 1900. The trouble therefore progressed steadily and she had frequent falls. In 1906 things had come to such a pass that she could no longer rest upon that joint and the knee appeared to be swollen and the foot twisted. It was then that another fall compelled her to go to Doctor Corseri of Vitorchiano, who gave the following account of this visit: 'I attest that the knee was swollen and painful to the touch. It was clearly established that there was a moderate quantity of fluid in the articular cavity. The movements of the joint were impeded and painful, and the patient could not rest the foot upon the ground.' He therefore declared that she was suffering from traumatic arthrosynovitis of the right knee. Two other doctors who saw Maria Menicucci agreed with this diagnosis.

The trouble, however, continued its course. 'The symptoms in the knee,' attested the patient, 'became gradually worse, for whether I was walking or standing resting on a stick my foot might at any moment twist and cause me to fall, and these falls made the knee worse. The doctor came to visit me several times and confirmed his diagnosis of synovitis. He sometimes added that it would be necessary to resect the knee-cap or even to amputate the leg above the knee.' The doctor naturally suggested the remedies that were most likely to be efficacious, but when tried they bore no fruit. He himself admitted this. 'The most efficacious therapeutic applications used in similar circumstances,' he said, 'had no result in this case after five months' treatment; the pain and the serious alteration in the functioning of the knee still persisted.'

This was the state of affairs when in 1907 Maria Menicucci had to go to Pistoia for a few months. But here things became worse than ever. Her falls were more frequent, the swelling increased in size and walking became more difficult. From Pistoia she went to Lucca with a relative who was entering the Passionist Convent there. The Mother Superior gave her a relic of Gemma Galgani and exhorted her to recommend herself with confidence to her intercession. Maria applied the relic to her knee and began a triduum to the Servant of God, but without result. On her return to Pistoia she began a novena, keeping the relic applied to her knee all the time. There was no change in her condition until the last day of the novena, when on her return from Mass she felt that she was cured. Her knee which had been swollen in the morning was found to be its normal size; all the pain and inconvenience had disappeared, and from that day there has been no return of her trouble. Her cure was therefore instantaneous, complete and lasting. The doctors expressed their great astonishment, and the experts deputed by the Sacred Congregation of Rites to enquire into

the facts declared: 'The cure of the right knee of Signorina Maria Menicucci is outside the limits of a natural fact.'

The second miracle was worked in favour of a priest named Ulysses Fabrizi, of Canepina, who resided at Capraola in the diocese of Civita Castellana. On 18 October 1919, Father Fabrizi, who was then seventy-six years of age, knocked his right shin against a chair in his house, and suffered a slight abrasion from which blood flowed. Shortly after he began to feel his foot paining him and applied some remedies. At the end of a week, far from healing, the abrasion seemed to have developed into a wound so that he was advised to go to the doctor. However, he did not go, but for twelve days had recourse to remedies suggested by the Sisters at the Hospital. At the end of this time, seeing that there was no improvement, he took the advice of the Sisters and went to Ronciglione to see a doctor. However, although the doctor's prescriptions were faithfully carried out, the wound continued to grow worse, so that he had to take to his bed. According to the doctor and to those who attended Father Fabrizi, it was a case of 'varicose ulcer of the right leg.' The sight of the wound made a strong impression. It had increased in size to about seven or eight centimeters. It was a deep purple and along the edges there were small pustules. The cure was made difficult by the advanced age of the patient, who besides was suffering from other diseases.

In the evening of 26 November 1919, Father Fabrizi was suffering so much that a local chemist was called in, but he suggested that the prescriptions of the doctor in charge of the case should be continued and that he should go to Rome on the following day to see a specialist. The chemist described the state of the wound thus: 'The wound was about fifteen centimeters in length and seven in breadth. The edges were very much inflamed, swollen and lacerated.

The surface was torn but covered here and there by dead tissue. I think there may have been a purulent secretion present. The wound was flat with deep cavities in some places, and of a palish red color. The physical and moral state of Father Fabrizi was depressed and he was feeling more pain and inconvenience. than on other days.'

The advice of the chemist worried Father Fabrizi very much, and when everyone had left his room he began to reflect upon what he ought to do. 'Feeling upset and preoccupied by the necessity of going at my age to Rome,' he afterwards deposed, 'I uttered a fervent prayer to the Servant of God, saying: "O Gemma, cure this wound, for I desire to see thee raised to the Altars, and when that happens I shall die content!"' Then he closed his eyes, and slept well, a thing he had not done on the other nights.

On the following morning when the bandages were removed in order that the wound might be dressed, to the surprise of all, it was seen to be cured. Father Fabrizi was overjoyed. 'Gemma has done it,' he told all who asked how he was cured. He got up, walked about and experienced no pain whatever. Considering his age, the advanced state of the wound, and other circumstances, everyone was expecting his death, but, instead, he was perfectly restored to health. The medical experts who submitted the case to a minute and rigorous examination, agreed that in the night of 26 - 27 November 1919, the varicose ulcer of Father Fabrizi was healed instantaneously, perfectly and in a manner clearly opposed to physico-pathological laws and clinical experience, and they declared: 'With profound and clear consciousness of what we say, we affirm in the most explicit manner that the cure of Don Ulysses Fabrizi belongs to the supernatural sphere and must be regarded as miraculous.'

BEATIFIED

Heaven had spoken and the, Sovereign Pontiff in a Decree promulgated on 19 February 1933, declared that the Beatification of the Venerable Gemma Galgani might now be safely proceeded with. The Ponent of the Cause, Cardinal Granito Pignatelli, could now rest satisfied; the diocese of Lucca and the Passionist Congregation could now exult with pride at the honor that was soon to be bestowed upon them; and the multitude of the devout clients of Gemma could glory in the coming exaltation of their heavenly protectress.

Gemma Galgani was beatified on 14 May 1933, the fourth Sunday after Easter. In Saint Peter's, Rome, under Michael Angelo's dome, and framed in Bernini's Rays, the picture of this meek and humble girl was seen surrounded with glory. Once more the words of the Holy Ghost were verified to the letter: 'God, who setteth up the humble on high' (Job 5:11). The triumph of Blessed Gemma recalls the message that went forth from Rome in the Jubilee year of the Redemption, and was echoed throughout the world: 'Oh miserable modern world, return to the consideration of the Passion of Christ; take refuge in His Wounds!'

About This EBook

The text of this ebook is taken from Blessed Gemma Galgani, by Father Amedeo, C.P., published in 1934. It was translated from the Italian by Father Osmund Thorpe, C.P. in 1935. It has the Nihil Obstat of Edward J. Mahoney, S.Th.D., Censor deputatus, and the Imprimatur: Joseph Butt, Vicar General, Archdiocese of Westminster, England.

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